THE CHURCH WHAT IS IT?

W. T. P. WOLSTON

THE CHURCH: WHAT IS IT?

The Church: What is it?

TEN LECTURES

ON THE CHURCH OF THE NEW TESTAMENT—
SEEN TO BE ESTABLISHED, ENDOWED,
UNITED, AND FREE.

BY

W. T. P. WOLSTON, M.D.,

AUTHOR OF

"BEHOLD THE BRIDEGROOM"; "SIMON PETER: HIS LIFE AND LETTERS";
"ANOTHER COMFORTER"; "THE FORTY DAYS OF SCRIPTURE";
"NIGHT SCENES OF SCRIPTURE"; "YOUNG MEN OF
SCRIPTURE"; "HANDFULS OF PURPOSE";
"AULD JOHN," &C. &C.

THIRD EDITION.

EDINBURGH: "GOSPEL MESSENGER" OFFICE, 2 BRISTO PLACE.
GLASGOW AND EDINBURGH: JOHN MENZIES & CO.
LONDON: JAMES NISBET & CO., 21 BERNERS STREET.

1924.

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN AT
THE DARIEN PRESS, EDINBURGH

PREFACE.

THE preface of a book is usually the apology for its existence. The Author does not tender one in this case, the occasion for its appearance being far too grave. Scotland has lately been convulsed by a judgment of the House of Lords, which was the result of an appeal to it to decide *Which is the Church?* entitled to certain temporalities.

"The Battle of the Churches" has drawn the eyes of Christendom on the combatants, and in many a mind raised a doubt as to the reality of Christianity, while numbers of the sheep and lambs of Christ's true flock have been flung into distress and perplexity of mind. Under these circumstances it cannot be contended that an inquiry in Scripture as to *What is the Church?* is superfluous.

If the reader suggest that the inquiry might with more propriety have come from another quarter than the pen of an M.D., the Author ventures to reply that he is but walking in the steps of "Luke, the beloved physician," in using his pen in divine things. That God-honoured physician was inspired by the Holy

Ghost to write the Gospel which bears his name and also the Acts of the Apostles, from which much in the following pages has been culled.

To inspiration the Author, of course, makes no pretence whatever. At the same time he gladly owns his implicit faith in all the Scriptures as God-breathed, their plenary inspiration being no matter of doubt with him.

His happy work has been to make an appeal, not to the House of Lords, but to the Word of the LORD, which endureth for ever.

"Thus saith the LORD," was the credential of all His messengers in days gone by, and "thus saith the LORD" is, in divine things, the only Court of Appeal to-day.

W. T. P. W.

46 CHARLOTTE SQUARE,
EDINBURGH, *December* 29, 1904.

CONTENTS.

LECTURE I.

PAGE

A New Departure - - - - - - 1

LECTURE II.

A Notable Birthday - - - - - - 24

LECTURE III.

The House of God - - - - - - 57

LECTURE IV.

Established and Endowed - - - - 82

LECTURE V.

The Body of Christ: The United Church - 109

LECTURE VI.

The Holy Spirit's Temple: The Free Church 136

LECTURE VII.

Gifts, Ministry, and Local Office - - - 165

LECTURE VIII.

PAGE
THE CANDLESTICK AND THE BRIDE - - - 192

LECTURE IX.

KING DAVID'S NEW CART - - - - - 223

LECTURE X.

THE CALF AND THE CAMP - - - - - 242

THE CHURCH: WHAT IS IT?

LECTURE I.

A New Departure.

(Matt. xvi. 1-21, xviii. 15-20.)

IN touching the subject of the Church, I think it will help us very much if we notice what a complete and perfect change in the ways of God, and in the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ, occurs in this sixteenth chapter of Matthew. It is a very common thought in the minds of Christians to-day, that God's way of dealing with man has been pretty much the same all along the line; that what we have in the Old Testament, in relation to Judaism, affords a certain measure of divine light as to the Church, and that while Christianity gives us a great deal more, it is but a continuation of Judaism.

Now this is a great mistake, and if that thought is in our minds, we shall have to dismiss it, for this reason—that the Old Testament says nothing whatever about the Church. It gives us God's dealings with an earthly people, whereas the Church is heavenly in its nature. Until Christ died and rose again, redemption being accomplished, the veil rent Christ gone on high as Man, and the Holy Ghost come

down, there could not be that which you find the New Testament speaks of as the Church of God—Christ's Assembly. In the chapter before us the Lord announces a most important thing to Peter. There was something He was about to build. Let us hear His teaching. What we have to do is not to be careful to retain what we may have received from any human source as to this subject, but to see that what we believe we have received from God. God's Word is our only lesson-book, and the sooner we are quit of what is not found in God's Word the better, because it is valueless. We can only grow by the truth, and be formed by the truth, and therefore the importance of the word, "Buy the truth, and sell it not" (Prov. xxiii. 23). If some one says to me, "You are wrong about the Church," my reply is, "Then set me right," because I want to be right. I want to have the truth, and I take it you do also.

Let us inquire what is the change in the ways of God to which I have referred. The apostle Paul wrote thus: "Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers" (Rom. xv. 8). If I understand the meaning of Jesus Christ being "a minister of the circumcision," it is that He was the One who came to fulfil to the Jew the promises made by God to the fathers. Further, He came according to prophecy, and in fulfilment of prophecy. How was He received? We are told, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John i. 11). They did not want and would not have Him. That opened the way for God's eternal purpose regarding the Church to come out. Hence that scripture goes on to describe what is known in Christianity—the

distinctive blessing of those who believed in Jesus—"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John i. 12).

God's principle of action was this, "To the Jew first," and to the Jew the blessed Lord came. The promises made by God to the fathers—to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—are often alluded to in Scripture, and are all in relation to Christ, who was the seed of Abraham, the One of whom it is written, "All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (2 Cor. i. 20). The descendants of Abraham, brought out of Egypt, were put upon redemption ground by the Red Sea—typically the death and resurrection of Christ; then they voluntarily placed themselves under law, only to break it.

The Old Testament gives us the history of the complete testing and thorough breakdown of the first man, no matter where you find him, or his progeny. That was the time of the testing of the first man in responsibility, and began to draw to its close at the moment of which Scripture says, "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law" (Gal. iv. 4).

When man had been tried and tested in every possible way, and, on account of their sin and idolatry, God had been compelled to root out His chosen people Israel from Palestine, and they had been carried captive to Assyria and Babylon (though a remnant somewhat later had been recovered and brought back to Judæa), God sent forth His Son. The fulness of the time was when the complete ruin of everything put into man's hands in responsibility was manifest.

Then came the Lord Jesus Christ personally, and He was the last test. Man was tested in innocence, he failed: without law, he was lawless: under law, he was a law-breaker. When God appealed to His people Israel by His prophets—for we read, "I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them" (Jer. vii. 25)—they did not heed them. When John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus, came, they "knew him not, but did unto him whatsoever they listed" (Matt. xvii. 12).

The last test was in the Person of God's Son, and the effect of that was what makes the Gospel of Matthew so interesting. Christ was the fulfiller of all promise even as He was the subject of prophecy, hence all the Old Testament prophecies relate to Him, and give glowing descriptions of the glory of the kingdom in which He will yet be manifested, and in which there will be blessing for man upon earth. He was the One who should come to fulfil prophecy. He was the Messiah whom God had promised. Hence, to be the fulfilment of the prophecies that announced the full realisation of God's promises, Jesus—His own Son, the Messiah, the King of the Jews—came.

Now notice, please, that the Gospel of Matthew emphatically presents Jesus as the King of the Jews, and they are tested by Christ as such. This accounts for this saying in our chapter, "Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was the Christ" (Matt. xvi. 20, R.V.). Had that truth come out? It had. Was He the Christ? Undoubtedly. But here He says, Tell them no more that I am the Christ. Why this remarkable charge? Because all the proofs given of His Messiahship had been in vain to the nation. If you read it carefully

you will find Matthew's Gospel incontestably gives you the continuous presentation of Christ to the Jews as their King, their Messiah, their Head, with all the necessary proofs of the glory of His Person, and His title to the throne of David.

A glance at the chapters which precede the sixteenth, which I have read to you, will make this plain. Chapter i. gives us His genealogy as Son of "David *the king*" (ver. 6), and demonstrates His indefeasible title to the throne of David. In chapter ii. the wise men of the East came to Jerusalem inquiring, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" As a result His life is sought, and He is taken to Egypt, to fulfil Scripture (ver. 15). In chapter iii. He comes back to Galilee, and at the end of those wonderful thirty years of private life, of deep interest to the spiritual mind, but of which God has told us little, He emerges, comes to John to be baptized, and he baptized Him. What is the result? Praying at His baptism, the heavens are opened, the Spirit like a dove descends upon this blessed Man, and the Father's voice is heard declaring, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (vers. 16, 17). The Baptist heard and saw this, and his testimony, as recorded by John the Evangelist, is: "And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God" (John i. 33). The Baptist's clarion voice, that had already rung throughout Israel, charged on them their sins, and roused multitudes to repentance, had from that moment a sweeter

tale to tell, viz., This is the Son of God, fulfiller of prophecy, and promise likewise, and He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

Long before John's day, God, by the pen of David, had written: "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed . . . yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee" (Ps. ii. 2, 6, 7). When was that fulfilled? At His incarnation, when He came into the world. In the day of His birth He is owned by God as His Son, in fulfilment of Psalm ii., and in the day of His baptism He is announced to be such from the opened heavens by the Father's voice. But the Jews did not *hear* the Father nor *see* Jesus at Jordan, and, alas, they did not *believe* that the Scriptures which so plainly marked Him out to be the Son of God found their answer and fulfilment in Him. They were not, however, incredulous about the Old Testament in that day. It is very strange how incredulous men are in this day. Are *you* incredulous? If you are, I pity you—you are missing a great deal. At Jordan, the Father announces the glorious fact that the lowly praying Man whom John baptized was His beloved Son, in whom was all His delight, and John the Baptist passed on the word, which Peter by his confession and others bring out later.

Then in Matthew iv. we have the Temptation in the wilderness. He who was the true King, ere He goes out into the scene of man's misery and sin to deliver him, defeats the usurper, Satan. He becomes the moral victor of the enemy, by never departing from the place He had taken of dependence and

obedience, as Man. Thereafter we have a summary of the wonderful deeds He did (see vers. 23, 24)—miracles which proved Him to be the Messiah of whom Isaiah spoke (chap. xxxv.). Then in the so-called Sermon on the Mount, we find in chapters v., vi., vii., what are manifestly the laws of His kingdom—the principles which should characterise those who enter it.

Chapters viii. and ix. bring together twelve remarkable miracles, which declare the powers of His kingdom, and reveal the loving and tender heart of the King, attesting His Messiahship to the uttermost. In chapter x. He sent His disciples out to preach the kingdom. Was their testimony believed? Alas, no! for chapter xi. records that the places where His mightiest works were done repented not; and then all the deeper glories of His Person come out, when rejected upon the line of earthly promise in which He had been presented to Israel.

Chapter xii. records that "the Pharisees went out and held a council against him, how they might destroy him" (ver. 14), and accuse Him of being in league with Satan. The nation utterly rejected their Messiah at this point, and He consequently rejects them. This is figuratively taught as He got into a boat, pushed off from the shore, and taught the wonderful lessons of Matthew xiii. The seven parables there unfolded bring in the idea of an entirely new departure and manner of activity on God's part. The law addressed itself to man as though God had hitherto been seeking to get something from man. He got nothing. Now, that day was over, and there was to be a new kind of ministry altogether—God was going to put something into

man, instead of trying to get something out of him, which was the principle of law—"A sower went forth to sow." Further, "the *mysteries* of the kingdom of heaven" take the place of the kingdom in *manifestation.* This last is deferred to a day of glory yet to come.

In chapter xiv. John the Baptist is beheaded, and in chapter xv., which is full of deep significance before chapter xvi., the whole state of man in the flesh is judged, whether on the religious side of it as presented in the leaders of the nation, or in its purely natural state (vers. 16-20). The Pharisees and Sadducees were the leaders of religious ideas and thought, and what the Lord said about them we do well to heed in our day. They might be and doubtless were outwardly very sanctimonious, but they were opposing God's work and God's Son, hence the Lord says, "Let them alone." A Pharisee was one who went in for ritualism, and the improvement of the flesh. The Sadducee was a rationalist, who denied revelation and a future state. We are surrounded by both these principles now. Each equally hated Christ, for He exposed both. The truth is never palatable to man, because it cuts up and exposes him. It shows man wherein he is wrong, and he does not like that. The Pharisees did not like the Lord's assertion that the hypocrisy of forms had been substituted for truth in the inward parts, and that man's heart—spite of his use of legal religion—was the source of evil only. At this they were greatly "offended" (ver. 12), and His disciples told Him so. "But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (ver. 13). What is not of God cannot stand. Then follows the injunction:

"*Let them alone*: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (ver. 14).

There is a great principle here in "let them alone." Now mark—if you have a blind leader, and you are blind yourself, the ditch is the only end of your road. Christianity, however, is not the blind leading the blind; nor the seeing leading the blind; but the seeing leading the seeing. God delights to give us light that we may see His things, but for their enjoyment and profitable use all depends upon our subjection to Christ, to the Holy Ghost, and to the Scriptures. God makes very little of man, whether you, me, or any other. And the more man is out of sight in divine things the better—he is very often in the way. What Christians have to do in the present day of Church crisis and Church difficulty is to take their eyes off every man, and every system man has set up, and seek to learn what God says about His Church in His Word. I believe that to-day God would turn His people back again to the Holy Scriptures for light and guidance as to the Church. I came over the Tweed more than forty years ago, and there is a marked and very sorrowful difference in the way Scripture is regarded now and then. At that time it was generally believed and revered. Now it is almost universally disregarded and set aside; and what I desire that we should do is to turn more reverently, really, and truly to the Scriptures—the only source of real light for man here—to learn God's mind regarding that Church which He calls His.

Having instructed His disciples in chapter xv. as regards the leaders, viz., to "*let them alone*," you find that the Lord Himself in chapter xvi. "*left them and*

departed" (ver. 4), a significant expression of what was to happen to Israel. But the judgment goes deeper, even to the total setting aside of man in the flesh, his heart being only the corrupt spring of every form of evil. At this point the Lord gives up the Jewish nation, in the person of their leaders. It was at that moment that "the Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would show them a sign from heaven" (xvi. 1). He replied that they could understand the weather, but not God's ways, and then added: "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas" (xvi. 4). What was that? It was the death and resurrection of Christ as the only sign that could be added to the marvellous one that had been given them in Immanuel, the Virgin's Son, to which they were totally blind, else they had not asked for a sign from heaven.

"And he left them, and departed" (ver. 4), is what inaugurates the totally new ministry of Christ, as now He leaves Judæa and goes to Cæsarea Philippi. This town—now known as Baneas—was outside the limits of the land of Israel, situated at the foot of Mount Hermon, and close to the most easterly source of the river Jordan; and must not be confounded with Cæsarea, the Roman seaport capital of Palestine, where the gospel first reached the Gentiles (Acts x.). On Gentile ground Jesus puts the most serious question that can be presented to any human heart, that is, Whom men in general said that He was. The Jew had failed to see that He was the Messiah, and the day was over for the Jew. But was He not still the minister of the circumcision? Yes, but the circumcision would not

have Him, the nation was about to refuse Him, and prefer a robber and murderer to Himself. Hence He breaks with Judaism, and brings out the wonderful truth that we have in the latter part of the sixteenth chapter.

Just then it was that "he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" (ver. 13). It was in principle, "What think ye of Christ?" What was the effect produced upon the hearts of men by what had been manifested in that blessed One? No proof was wanting of who He was. They had been furnished with plenty of opportunity to know who He was; John the Baptist had declared Him, and His own mighty works had borne witness of Him, and the Father Himself had done so also. We read (Luke viii. 1) that He went "throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God." There was not a hamlet where the blessed feet of the Son of God did not carry Him in grace, to tell out to men the heart of God; and to deliver from every form of the oppression of Satan's power. But the end was really this—We do not know who He is. Some said He was John the Baptist, risen from the dead; some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets; it little mattered which. These were simply the guesses of profound moral indifference. All was a matter of opinion, not faith, resulting in that careless uncertainty which always marks the soul that has no sense of need. Where need exists in the soul, no rest is found till Christ is really known. The Pharisees and Sadducees were hostile to Him, and the mass of the nation were heartlessly indifferent.

To the little group of disciples His grace had

gathered around Him He then says, "But whom say ye that I am?" Peter, to whom the Father had revealed His Son, furnishes the answer of faith. He now apprehended Him to be much more than the Messiah, the fulfiller of promise and prophecy, and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the *living* God" (ver. 16). Full, blessed confession, in which was no uncertainty of mere human opinion, but the result of the revelation to his soul of the Person of Christ, which the Father had been pleased to make to him, as the Son of God in a power of life superior to death.

On a previous occasion when many went away, and walked no more with Him, "Jesus said unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? THOU HAST the words of eternal life. And WE BELIEVE and ARE SURE that thou art THE HOLY ONE OF GOD" (see R.V., John vi. 67, 69). That was a fine confession of Peter's; and the man that confesses Christ according to the light he has will get more. Peter got more. In John vi. he says, "Thou hast the words of eternal life," and "Thou art the Holy One of God." He saw in measure what He *was* and what He *had*. What He *is* forms the immovable resting-place of our souls as we repose in Him and His work. What He *has* becomes the everlasting supply to our souls in their manifold needs. You get into your hearts those blessed words, "Thou hast," and "Thou art," and all the need of your soul will find its full answer in Christ, for He loves to minister what He is and what He has to the longing heart.

Peter gets a distinct advance here. It is not merely that Christ was the fulfiller of the second Psalm, which

Nathanael confessed when he said, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel" (John i. 49); and Martha too acknowledged when she said, "I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world" (John xi. 27). There were souls here and there that had the sense that He was God's blessed Son; but Peter goes further, as he confesses, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of *the living* God." He owns Him to be the Son of Him in whom is life and life-giving power. The life of God cannot be destroyed, and the Son of the *living* God cannot be overcome. In Him is that power of life which nothing can vanquish. Satan had the power of death; the Son of God has the power of life. The unchangeable power of life, even though He go into death, cannot be overcome of death. It is the very reverse. He annuls death. Every other man was overcome of death; the Son of the *living* God could not be. It is well to notice here the force of "*living*," because He speaks of death, and "the gates of hades," which refer to Satan's kingdom. That Assembly which is founded on the unchanging power of life in the Son of God cannot be affected by the kingdom of death. Glorious truth!

Now mark the four things which the Lord brings out—four deeply important things. The first thing is the revelation made by the Father to Peter of who Jesus was; second, the new name again given to Simon by Jesus, who by his confession of faith in the Person of the Son of the *living* God was thereby manifested to be a stone of the building Christ was about to build on the foundation revealed in what the Father taught Peter; third, the announcement never made before that "upon this rock *I will build*

my church,"—the Assembly yet to be built by Himself on the foundation of His own Person, acknowledged by faith to be "the Son of the *living* God," and known as such in resurrection; and fourth, "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" which He would give to Peter, *i.e.*, authority of administration in the kingdom on earth, in His name. And here let me say, we must be careful not to confound the kingdom with the Church; they are two distinct things. The first is one of the dispensations of time and the last of them, the latter is not. The Church is a heavenly structure, though formed on earth. The kingdom is an earthly dispensation, though ruled from heaven, because the King is there now.

How did Peter get this wonderful revelation? I think he had been to college—not a college that man instituted. It was the Father's College. He had been taught by the Father. The Father, in His favour to Peter, taught him that the blessed, lowly, gracious Man whom he was following was His Son—the eternal Son become a Man, that the Father might be revealed in Him. "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him" (Matt. xi. 27). There are inscrutable depths of glory in the Person of Christ that no human mind can fathom, but what we cannot fathom, we can enjoy. Without doubt it is the inscrutability of the glory of His Person that is the guarantee to faith of the divinity of Jesus—divinity which His self-renunciation—in emptying Himself and assuming humanity—might have hidden from the eyes of unbelief. But can you not understand, now that it is revealed, God's Son becoming a Man, to bring out according to all

that was in His heart, the heart of God to you, and to bring you to God, and into the apprehension and enjoyment of so great a love?

Carefully note that to know Christ personally as He has been revealed is the basis of all blessing to the soul, and paves the way to deeper enjoyment of God's mind. Here the Lord says, Peter, My Father has told you who I am; now I will tell you what you are. The Father had spoken to Peter, and now the Son in His own right speaks. "And I also say" (R.V.)—not "And I say also," invert those words: He has somewhat of deepest moment to say to Peter—"I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my assembly; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (ver. 18). The Greek word ἐκκλησία here translated "church" in our version, meant originally *an assembly of the citizens of any particular state.* The word as used by the Lord—"MY ASSEMBLY" gives it an unique character; and marks it off from every other assembly. It is the Assembly viewed in the character of a house—not a place as men now use the term generally. And what was Peter? A stone. And what is a stone? A bit of a rock. Every Christian by faith in Christ, the living stone, is a stone, a bit of the rock.

Peter, you see, gets his new name confirmed here. When he was at first brought to the Lord by his brother Andrew, the Lord said to him, "Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called *Cephas* (Peter), which is by interpretation, *A stone*" (John i. 42). If the rock has a certain nature, a certain character, so has the stone which is a bit of it. It is a wonderful thing to be a Christian; he is identified by life and nature with Christ. He belongs to Christ,

he is the subject of the Father's love and favour, and of the Son's salvation, and there has been a work wrought in him that nobody has wrought but Christ.

You will remember how beautifully Peter takes up and applies this thought, when he says, "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious; to whom coming, as unto a *living stone*, disallowed. indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as *living stones*, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. ii. 3-5). Who are these living stones? All true believers in Christ. What was personal to Peter in Matthew xvi. he passes on, to all who have come to Christ, in the epistle. Are all professing Christians such? Oh no. Profession is one thing; possession is quite another. I expect you are a professing Christian; but whether you are *a living stone* is another thing altogether. Peter, by faith in Christ, had come to have part in Christ. The Lord had quickened him, and now He quickens us. To all true believers in Himself, who come to Him, tasting that He is gracious—and oh, how gracious He is—He imparts His own life, and thus they become living stones—like Peter.

We get the illustration and earliest anticipative expression of this glorious truth in the twentieth of John. There the Lord came into the upper room, where the apostles and other believers were gathered together, and "breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (ver. 22). As the last Adam alive from the dead, He breathed on them—recalling the action of God with the first Adam, in creation—and thus brought them into life in a new condition, *i.e.*, that of the risen Christ—His own risen life. He

had already said to Mary, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (ver. 17). Christianity is this—Christ risen from the dead, taking into association with Himself, all that are His own, and putting them one and all into the place that He now takes before God, as Man, risen from among the dead. His Assembly, those that are now His, are spoken of under four different figures in the New Testament—a House, a Body, a Candlestick, and a Bride, as we shall see later.

Let us consider a little more what He says to Peter in Matthew xvi.: "Upon this rock I will build my church." Now, what was the rock? Was it Peter? We have been told so, but you do not believe it, do you? Do you think Peter was the rock? A shifting sort of rock poor Peter would have made. He was a stone, and sometimes rather like a rolling stone too. And have not you found yourself to be like a rolling stone sometimes? Undoubtedly the rock was Christ. The confession of His name, by faith in His Person, as Son of the living God is all important. It is His Person that is here contemplated as set forth in resurrection, for on this glory of His Person all is founded.

Resurrection is the proof that He is the Son of the living God. We read, that He is "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. i. 4). He was the Son of God before He died; He was declared to be the Son of God by resurrection. He was the only man ever taken out from among the dead; but God has taken Him out, and He is alive to-day at God's right hand. He is

proved to be the Son of God, with power over all the domain of death, by resurrection, and it is upon this Christ builds His Assembly. Observe carefully the Lord's words: "Upon this rock I *will build* my assembly"—not "I have built," nor "I am building"; it was a future work, necessarily connected with His death and resurrection, which brought to nought the power He speaks of as "the gates of hades." "My assembly" is a beautiful word. People usually think of a church as composed of stone and lime, that which the eye can see, but "the assembly" in Scripture carries quite a different idea, being Christ's redeemed people, born of the Spirit, washed in His blood, and sealed by the Holy Ghost. It is made of stones; and what is the cementing, the uniting bond? The Holy Ghost. And what kind of stones are they? Living stones. And who made them living stones, and built them in? Jesus. Man is not the builder here. Peter did not build the Church—he did administer the kingdom. You must keep distinct the difference between what Christ builds, and what man builds in responsibility. That may or may not be good building, and what is worthless will disappear in the fire (see 1 Cor. iii.). What Christ builds can never be destroyed, undermined, or overthrown, "and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it." What are "the gates of hades"? All the power of Satan—that is the idea. It is a figurative expression.

Satan had the power of death, but in the cross of Christ not only was redemption accomplished, the claims of God met, and the blood shed that would blot out sin, so that we could be righteously justified before God; but there is also the absolute annulling of

the power of Satan. Christ went down into death—the very citadel of Satan's power—overcame him, and left the stronghold of the enemy without strength, *i.e.*, He burst "the gates of hades," annulled death, and broke the power of the tomb. God raised Him from the dead, and to-day He is a risen, victorious Christ; and upon this rock of the unchangeable power of life in Him the Assembly is built. If you be a part of what He calls "My assembly," no power of Satan will ever be able to dislodge, undermine, or upset you.

There are two other scriptures I will now allude to, as to the Church, where the Builder is manifestly divine. Paul, in writing to the Ephesians, says, You "are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone" (Eph. ii. 20). In his day the work was going on, but who built? Paul? No. The apostles? No. Why? Because they were stones—if foundation stones—in the building, not builders; stones do not build themselves in. The apostle says, Ye are "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets"—they were connected with the foundation. In Matthew xvi. it is Christ building; and in Ephesians ii. 20 the work of building is equally divine—no man has any hand in it. We read of Paul as a master-builder in 1 Corinthians iii., but you must not confound Christ's building with what man builds. It is the mixing up of the two that has brought in all the confusion and false doctrine which we see to-day, culminating in the confessional and the blasphemy of man being able to forgive sins. We must not mingle the things that differ.

Again, we read from the pen of Peter: "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed

indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. ii. 3-5). The work is still going on, it is not finished yet. Christ had not begun it when He spoke to Peter. He began it after He rose from the dead, and ascended on high; and when the Holy Ghost came down on the day of Pentecost, His Assembly began to be built. His work is still going on, hence Peter says, "You are being built up," and it is a very blessed thing to find yourself a stone in a building which the Lord has built. Such being the case, you can rejoice in the fact that Satan has no pick-axe that can pick you out.

Here then we find that not only Christ builds the Assembly, the foundation of which is the revelation of His name, but that its origin is divine—it is purely a divine work. All this is confirmed if we look now at Revelation xxi., where we see the Church as "the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven" (ver. 2). The Church of God belongs to heaven. In its nature, origin, character, and destiny—yea, its absolute being before God—it is heavenly. The city comes down out of heaven from God. Its origin is from God, and its nature is heavenly; and it is a great thing for every Christian to see that he is heavenly—he belongs to heaven.

Now for a little let us look at the kingdom, and seek to understand what the Lord means, as He says to Peter, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt.

xvi. 19). Did Christ give Peter the keys of heaven? Impossible. Men have painted pictures of the Lord and His apostles, and Peter with keys hanging at his girdle, while a flock of sheep surrounds them. Hence many people think that Peter has the keys of the Church. There are none such. This is a pure fallacy. Sheep are not fed by keys, and Christ does not build with keys. The important truth which the Lord taught has not been seized. The value of keys is to open doors, and when the doors are opened the keys are of no more use. It was a privilege Peter received of the Lord, a great favour—he was to be the administrator of the kingdom of heaven. The King has been refused, and before the King comes back again, and the kingdom is set up (as it will be in the millennial reign), the whole of the truth of the Church is brought out—the Assembly is built. Peter, as the servant, is used of the Lord in the preaching of the gospel, and he administers that which is connected with the kingdom. Christ the King is in heaven, and He can administer things down here by a special servant, or by His Church, which was to occupy Christ's place on earth. Hence we read elsewhere: "Tell it unto the assembly; but if he neglect to hear the assembly, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. xviii. 17, 18). The Assembly is to act for and in Christ's name during His absence — the only successor, known to Scripture, of the authority committed to Peter in Matthew xvi., but note, in a different sphere. It is the Church in this passage, not the kingdom of heaven it applies to, but neither Peter

nor the Church can bind things in heaven, though what they bound on earth heaven would ratify.

Peter has nothing to do with letting people into heaven. Christ has the keys of heaven, be sure of that. Hear His words: "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of death and hades" (Rev. i. 18). He keeps those keys, but in His service down here He may and did use Peter, and put into his hands two keys wherewith to administer the kingdom of heaven. Why not one key? He had to open two doors. In Acts ii., where he preached his first sermon on the day of Pentecost, he put one key into the Jewish door, and opened the way for them to get blessing. The name of that key was "Repentance," I incline to think. In Acts x. he went down to Cæsarea and opened the door to the Gentiles, and the name of that key was "Believe." The Jew was called to *repentance*, and to clear himself from his nation now guilty of the murder of their Messiah. To the Gentile, that had no link with, and no claim on God, Peter says, "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever *believeth* in him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts x. 43).

Remission of sins, and the reception of the Holy Spirit, so as to form part of the Assembly of God, is a divine work; man has no hand in it. It is Christ's work, and will stand. Of the thirteen hundred different sects or so-called churches in Christendom which man has built it may be safely affirmed that not one of them is *the* Church of God. They are all human systems which, after different man-conceived patterns men have built. Very possibly many true Christians may be found in each one of them, but they fail to

represent the scriptural thought of "My assembly," which embraces all that are Christ's at any time on the earth, till He comes, or the aggregate of all called out in this special epoch when He comes. But you and I are now concerned about what Christ builds, and where we are in relation to that building should exercise our hearts. Let us then be like the Bereans of whom it is written: "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and *searched the Scriptures daily*, whether these things were so" (Acts xvii. 11).

LECTURE II.

A Notable Birthday.

(Lev. xxiii. 9-21; Acts ii.)

THE day of Pentecost was the Birthday of the Church of God. That statement may seem a little strange to some; but I think if we look at Scripture, and listen to Scripture, we shall soon be convinced that such is the case. We have seen that the Lord Jesus Christ told His beloved servant Peter, "Upon this rock I *will build* my assembly"—*i.e.*, on the confession of Himself as Son of the living God. That it was as the Son of God risen from the dead is proved by the scriptures I have just read in Leviticus and the Acts of the Apostles. I think if we use the word "Assembly," we shall get the thought of God better than by the use of the term "Church," because that term, so generally, is connected in people's minds with what is material—they think of a building which human hands have erected.

"Upon this rock I *will* build my assembly" was that which the Lord indicated to Peter in Matthew xvi., but much had taken place between Matthew xvi. and Acts ii. He had been taken by the leaders of the nation, who laid a snare and a trap for Him. They brought Him before the priestly judges, who ought to have interceded for Him, but they condemned Him,

and passed Him on to the Roman governor with the demand that He should die, "because he made himself the Son of God." Much against his own will Pilate signed His death-warrant: to Calvary was Jesus taken, and there He was crucified. Over His head Pilate wrote in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, the three languages of the civilised world at that moment, "This is Jesus the King of the Jews."

It was the Roman habit, when a man was crucified, to put over his head what his crime was, and Christ's crime was nailed over His head, "This is Jesus the King of the Jews," *i.e.*, His crime consisted in being what He truly was. The chief priests said to Pilate: "Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written, I have written" (John xix. 21, 22). He had written the truth—Jesus *was* the King of the Jews; but the nation in cold blood crucified their Messiah, their King: He died, and all was over with Israel as a nation. Their history for the time being was over before God. Their guilt had not, however, culminated in the crucifixion of their Messiah, for they crowned it by refusing the testimony of Peter in Acts iii.—who assured them that if repentant, "God shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you" (ver. 20)—and by resisting the Holy Ghost, who through the lips of Stephen told them Christ was alive at God's right hand. That faithful witness they slew, as they had slain his Master, whom morally he resembled in the manner of his death.

They then fulfilled the Lord's parable of Luke xix., in which "a certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten

pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, *We will not have this man to reign over us*" (vers. 12-14). Stephen was the man sent up with this message. They refused their Messiah *upon earth;* and when, *in heaven*, He is by the grace of God, presented to them again—in answer to His own intercession for them on the cross—they refused Him again. Thus was another parable fulfilled: "A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none. Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it; and if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down" (Luke xiii. 6-9). I do not doubt that the three years indicate the Lord's own ministry, and thereafter that God gave the extra year of grace between the crucifixion and that which happened in the history of Stephen. Alas! there was no response to God's grace in the nation generally—they refused Christ still, and in Stephen's martyrdom sent after Him this message, "We will not have this man to reign over us."

It is important to observe the truth in this way; otherwise the mind is not clear to see that God is absolutely justified in His treatment of Israel, and that the Church of God, now to come in view, is an entirely new departure in the ways of God. There can now be introduced into this scene something totally new, that had not been before, and that will not be again. When the Church is completed it will

be taken to heaven, to which it belongs, and then will Jesus of Nazareth, the now rejected King, again come back to earth, get His rights, and have His kingdom established. Then will Israel again come in view and be blessed under their Messiah, accepted and believed in by the nation. In the meantime the Church of God, which is the subject of His eternal counsel, is introduced into the scene consequent upon the death, resurrection, and ascension to heaven of the Lord Jesus Christ. Until He comes back again to take His kingdom and power, and reinstate the Jew, as He will do—because He is the fulfiller of promise, what Scripture calls the Church, the Assembly of God, is the subject of the Holy Spirit's activity.

When this is seen one can understand the meaning of the apostle's injunction, "Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God" (1 Cor. x. 32). This last was a totally new structure, which had its birthday on the day of Pentecost. It did not exist previous to the death of Christ, and will not be found on earth after the Rapture of the saints—the moment when the Lord comes to take up the Bride to Himself, to the peculiar place of blessing for which the Church is destined. She belongs to the rejected Man: the Church is in Christ, according to the purpose and counsel of God in eternity; and by the indwelling Spirit of God is united to Christ, so as to be the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. Out of the material of Jews as such, and Gentiles too, found on earth—out of these two classes the Assembly of Christ is formed by the operation of God's Spirit in individuals, who from that moment, all one in Christ, cease to be either Jews or Gentiles.

I want you now to notice the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. Christ had died, was risen, and Acts i. opens with the Lord seen in resurrection, walking in and out among His disciples, "until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen" (ver. 2). Here is a striking bit of instruction for us Christians. Jesus is seen, a Man alive from the dead and full of the Holy Ghost. So should it ever be with us. Thank God, in the glorified body we too shall be full of the Holy Ghost—the flesh gone, and nothing left but the fulness of the Holy Ghost, for worship, for the enjoyment of God, and for any service the Lord may put into our hands in that day. It is a lovely picture of what will be by-and-by. When thus risen, the Lord said to His disciples, "But tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke xxiv. 49); and adds, "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence" (Acts i. 5). Thereafter they were to be witnesses for Him "in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth" (ver. 8). Beginning at the guiltiest spot in the world, they were to go down to Judæa, where they did not care for Him, to Samaria, which appeared more ready to receive Him, and then to every corner of the earth. God steps outside all dispensations now. He has kept His promises to the fathers, but man has failed—the Jew has forfeited all right to God's favour; and God for the time being sets him aside, free to let out His heart to the ends of the earth, and thus the apostles have the commission to go out to the uttermost parts of the earth.

There is something delightfully fresh in this—God

can go out to all men. His disposition is that of grace toward all men, and He sends out His servants to declare this glorious fact, with its attendant blessings. The dividing wall, the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile has been broken down, and upon the ground of the death and resurrection of Christ, whereby God has been glorified, sin put away, and Satan's power annulled, God is free to come out with the presentation of His grace to man everywhere. In the Acts we shall see how He proceeds to carry this out. When the Lord had given His servants their commission, "while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight." And then the angels tell them, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (ver. 11). What is that? The Rapture? No, it is not here the Lord coming for the Church, but the moment of His re-appearing, when He comes back to the earth with His attendant saints in glory. He is coming back in glory, and the world will then see Him. The believers saw Him go up; and the unbelievers as well will see Him come back; but before that epoch there is another aspect of His coming—He will come for His people as detailed in 1 Thessalonians iv. 15-17.

The disciples, commanded to tarry at Jerusalem for the baptism of the Spirit, do what they are bidden, and spend the intervening time—ten days—in prayer. That is a great lesson for us. It was a wonderful ten days' prayer meeting, and look at the blessing that came at the end of it. In principle, this condition of dependence on the part of God's saints is always the precursor of blessing. Their moral state was right,

and they were prepared for what followed. Then we read: "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place" (Acts ii. 1). Pentecost has peculiar instruction for us, so we must seek to apprehend its meaning as given in the Old Testament.

If you will go back to Leviticus xxiii. you will there find a beautiful and instructive type of what is before us in Acts ii. The seven Feasts of the Lord there given are the Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Wave Sheaf, and the Two Wave Loaves, the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles. The first four teach lessons every Christian should learn, and must enter into if he is to be intelligent. The last three relate only to future Jewish history—the Feast of Trumpets typifying Israel being waked up to seek the Lord, the Day of Atonement their individual repentance before God (*see* Zech. xii. 10-14), and the Feast of Tabernacles their future national glory. The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread go together, and are full of instruction for us. The first is the type of the death of Christ—the blood being put upon the lintel and the door-posts—that shelters the soul from the righteous judgment of God. The unleavened bread is the holy separate walk that should characterise those who are sheltered by the blood of Christ. The Wave Sheaf and the Two Wave Loaves go also together, one indicating Christ, and the other the Church.

What then is the Wave Sheaf? Christ, risen and accepted before God for us—it could not be anything else. We read: "When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring *a sheaf of the first-fruits* of

your harvest unto the priest: and he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it" (Lev. xxiii. 10, 11). The full harvest was coming on, but God gets the first-fruits of it. God gets a great deal more out of the death and resurrection of Christ than we. We get a great deal, but God has infinitely more. "And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your God: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings" (ver. 14).

If we clearly see what God has found in Christ, then we understand much better what we ourselves find in Him, for the greater includes the less. If all the claims of God in righteousness are divinely met and He infinitely glorified in Christ's death, how much more easily are all the needs of my conscience and heart met? The reason why many believers to-day are in uncertainty as to forgiveness, salvation, and acceptance, is because they do not see what the death of Christ has effected for God. Following our type, observe what occurred on "the morrow after the Sabbath," in which Christ lay in the grave. The priest brought the Wave Sheaf to be accepted for Israel, but when the priest was waving the sheaf, what had taken place? "At the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week," the blessed Lord rose triumphant from the tomb, having accomplished the glorious work of redemption. His was "resurrection from among the dead," the pattern and type of His people's resurrection. That very morning the true Wave Sheaf had risen from among the dead, "become the *first-fruits* of them that sleep"

(1 Cor. xv. 20), and had said to Mary Magdalene, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (John xx. 17). That Wave Sheaf was accepted for us who believe, hence we read: "He hath made us *accepted in the beloved*" (Eph. i. 6). What is the acceptance of a Christian? It is the acceptance before God which now is Christ's—no less, and it could not be more.

What a wonderful thing that the believer stands before God in association with the Man that is alive from the dead. Just before His death, He said, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth *much fruit*" (John xii. 24). He was the unique, solitary corn of wheat, the only sinless Man that ever was in this world. He went into death, met all God's claims, and annulled Satan's power, hence, regarding His Assembly, could say to Peter, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Satan was vanquished. He who was the Son of the living God, by undergoing death, abolished it. But Christ is risen from the dead, death is annulled, He is now the risen victorious Man at God's right hand, and we are accepted in Him. That is the teaching of the Wave Sheaf.

With the Wave Sheaf there were certain offerings to be presented, viz., the Burnt Offering, which prefigured the devotedness of Jesus, Godward, even to death; and the Meat Offering, which denotes the devotedness of His life in all its perfection for God. He appreciated all the beauty of the life of Jesus, and all the devotedness of His heart, even unto death: they were sweet savour offerings that all went up to God. Note carefully that there was no Sin Offering

and no Peace Offering—which is the basis of communion — offered with the Wave Sheaf, because it represents Christ personally, who "did no sin," and never was out of communion with God.

Now look at the Wave Loaves: "And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the Sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven Sabbaths shall be complete: even unto the morrow after the seventh Sabbath shall ye number *fifty* days; and ye shall offer a *new* meat offering unto the Lord" (Lev. xxiii. 15, 16). There we reach the day of Pentecost, which is the fiftieth day after the waving of the sheaf of first-fruits. Then we read: "Ye shall bring out of your habitation *two wave loaves* of two tenth deals: they shall be of fine flour; they shall be *baken with leaven;* they are the *first-fruits* unto the Lord" (ver. 17). Here we have in type the day of Pentecost, and what originated then. There was a *new* meat offering of *two* wave loaves *baken* with leaven. In Acts ii. we have the antitype — God's people gathered together by the Holy Ghost, and presented before Him in connection with all the preciousness of Christ in life, death, and resurrection. The passover is His death; the wave sheaf His resurrection; the two wave loaves baken on the fiftieth day—the Holy Ghost forming the Church of God.

But why two loaves? There are not two Churches of God on earth—the Jewish and the Gentile. The very fact of there being two loaves — not one — is remarkable. The mystery of the Church was hidden, and this type does not reveal the secret, which could not come out till Christ had died, risen, and gone on high. Then the "one loaf" is plain enough. Hence

I judge it does not typify Jew and Gentile Churches, as some have thought. When God demands witness, His regular way is "two" witnesses. Christ was risen —the wave sheaf. Christians—the two wave loaves—are competent witnesses of the power of His resurrection. We must not forget that the truth of the Church was "kept *secret* since the world began, but *now* is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets (of the New Testament), according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith" (Rom. xvi. 25, 26). Again, we read of "the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been *hid* in God" (Eph. iii. 9). Further, Paul tells us of "the mystery which hath been *hid* from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints; to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. i. 26, 27). Hence we do not find the full truth of the mystery in our type—it was hidden.

The thought of the "two loaves" then, I judge, is competent testimony—God would have a real, true testimony to what Christ was and had accomplished. The two loaves were a testimony that there had been a harvest, and God had already got the first-fruits, for on the day of Pentecost "Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept" (1 Cor. xv. 20), was before Him in heavenly glory. These two loaves are then presented before the Lord. They are composed of very different elements—fine flour baken with leaven. The "fine flour" is the figure of the blessed holy humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ, the even expression of all perfections in a sin-

less Man. The "leaven" expresses what we are by nature, corrupt and corrupting. "They shall be baken with leaven; they are the first-fruits unto the Lord," is a wonderful statement. The Wave Sheaf—Christ—was first-fruits, and now it is the two loaves that are first-fruits. The figure of the "fine flour" brings all that is connected with the holiness of Christ as a Man before the eye, and both the Christian individually and the Church collectively stand before God in all the value and acceptability of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Why, then, was there leaven in this *new* meat-offering? Elsewhere we read, "No meat-offering which ye shall bring unto the Lord, shall be made with leaven; for ye shall burn no leaven, nor any honey, in any offering of the Lord made by fire" (Lev. ii. 11). Leaven symbolises the evil of nature, and honey the sweetness of nature. Neither will do for God. There is nothing in you and me that will do for God. It is only Christ that will do for God. Why then do we find the leaven here? Because, though you may be born of the Spirit, washed from your sins by the blood of the Son of God, and sealed by the Holy Ghost, there is still the evil of the flesh in you. You have a new nature as born of God, but you still have the old nature in you; hence the opposition of the two which every one born anew is conscious of (see Rom. vii. 14-25). Two natures are in the Christian; one craving evil and the indulgence of self; the other loving Christ and delighting in the will of God. But is the flesh always to work? No; for we have received the Spirit that we might not do the things that we would (Gal. v. 17; see also vers. 24, 25).

Leaven, in Scripture, be it observed, is always a figure of evil. I know people have tried to make out that it means good; but that is twisting Scripture. It is only and always evil. In the parable in Matthew xiii. the woman hides leaven in three measures of meal. That is not the gospel converting the world, as many teach, but the solemn fact that professing Christianity which God set up pure has been all corrupted, for leaven implies what is evil there, as elsewhere in Scripture.

Evil is in every believer, but knowing that Christ has been judged for his sin, he judges it in himself and refuses it. Sin is recognised by God as in me, but it is *not* supposed *to work*. The existence of sin in the Christian does not give a bad conscience; that comes if we allow it to work. The good conscience is gotten by the cleansing power of the blood of Christ; and that is hinted at in our type, as we read: "Then ye shall sacrifice one kid of the goats *for a sin offering*, and two lambs of the first year for a sacrifice of peace-offerings" (ver. 19). Where you have, in figure, the Church presented before God in all the perfections of Christ, though in the believer the existence of evil is recognised, you have the *one* goat for a sin offering. God recognises the fact that evil is in the believer; but it is supposed not to work, and its presence is met by the blood of the sin offering. There is no imputation of sin whatever; but you are before God in all the value of the work of Christ. The two lambs of the peace offering provide the basis of communion and worship. You cannot make too much of Christ, and what He is. Consequently we are told: "The priest shall wave them with the bread of the first-fruits for a wave offering before the Lord, with the

two lambs: they shall be holy to the Lord for the priest" (ver. 20).

Having learned the meaning of the type, let us now see its blessed fulfilment in the antitype as given in Acts i. and ii. There Christ is risen from the dead, gone into heaven, God accepts Him for His people, and the Holy Ghost comes down and falls on the one hundred and twenty gathered believers, and then adds to them three thousand new-born souls, and thus that day for the first time was constituted the Assembly of God. The start of the Church is intensely interesting, as showing how the saints were drawn together. "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with *one accord* in one place" (Acts ii. 1). The nucleus of the Church was small indeed, but from that day a deeper and larger work was to go on, in which Christ is to see of the travail of His soul. His Assembly by the descent of the Spirit of God was formed; and therefore, again, I say assuredly that the day of Pentecost was the birthday of the Church of God, because it had never existed before. From Abel downwards individual saints and servants of God had existed, but they were not in the Church. John the Baptist, and the thief on the cross, died before the Lord Jesus was risen to be the Head of it, or any one could be united to Him. It was due to Christ, who had so glorified God in death, that there should be an adequate answer to His sorrows and sufferings; and He finds that answer in the Assembly, which is His body, as she is also His Bride, the new Jerusalem.

It is a wonderful thing to be part of Christ's Assembly. The unconverted are not. If you are a mere professor or confessor of Christ, and possibly a so-called "Church member," but yet in your sins, you

are outside all this. But if you are a Christian, born of the Spirit redeemed and cleansed by the blood of Christ, and indwelt of the Spirit, you are in Christ before God, and a member of His body on earth. What a lift to the soul it is, and what a sense of favour it obtains when it can truly say, I am accepted in Him —God sees me in Him—I am part of His Bride so dear to His heart.

Scripture is full of types of this blessed truth of the Bride. Eve was the helpmeet of Adam; think of the Assembly as Christ's helpmeet. Rebecca was in figure the object of the Father's choice; the subject of the Holy Ghost's care, as the nameless servant carried her across the desert; and the object of Isaac's love—for "she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death" (Gen. xxiv. 67). What a wonderful thing to see the Church as the helpmeet and comfort of Christ, and may I not say what wondrous favour that you and I should be part of the Church?

Now see what we have in Acts ii. The disciples were all together. One Spirit moved them, and Christ was dear to their hearts. Though you may not be very intelligent, if you are saved, Christ is an object of affection to you; for "unto you that believe he is precious"; and if not — vain is your profession of Christianity. It is but form—a shell without a kernel. In this scene we get the kernel of Christianity; the Holy Ghost came down from an ascended Christ in glory to unite to Him and to one another all that believe in Him. They are also living stones in the building which Christ builds. God made the presence of His Spirit very manifest in both its corporate and individual aspects, when "suddenly there came a

sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting . . . and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" (vers. 2-4).

This was the blessed and prayerfully waited-for moment the Lord had predicted the night before His death: "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. . . . But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John xiv. 16, 17, 26). "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, he shall testify of me" (John xv. 26). "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you" (John xvi. 13-15).

Christianity consists in the individual possession, and the corporate indwelling of the ever-abiding blessed Spirit of Truth, the Holy Ghost. He had come upon men in days gone by, and left them; upon a Balaam, a Saul—type of man in the flesh—whom the Holy Ghost might use in the sovereignty of God, and then abandon them. He came upon David too, who afterwards feared he might lose Him—hence his prayer, "And take not thy Holy Spirit from me" (Ps. li. 11). This prayer, right enough from David, no

Christian intelligent in the ways of God could now pray, for the salient truth of Christianity is that the Holy Ghost would come and *abide* for ever in the one whose faith in Christ He seals.

On the day of Pentecost it was "a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind" that announced an unseen presence—the advent of the third Person of the Godhead to earth, to form the Assembly, the new dwelling-place of God, the body of Christ. In effecting that the Spirit makes His presence felt, not by an earthquake, but by a rushing mighty wind. Men compose the tabernacle, where God disdains not to dwell. Cleansed by the blood of Jesus, they are rendered fit to be God's habitation in Spirit. When this took place, the disciples—now a holy priesthood—are not driven from the Lord's presence like those of old (see 1 Kings viii. 10, 11). His presence is their joy, and they form His habitation. This is the dawn of Christianity.

Further, we read, "There appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them" (ver. 3). The Spirit of God had fallen upon Jesus like a dove, emblem of His own gentle and beautiful character, of whom it is said, "He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets" (Matt. xii. 19). Here the sign and form of His appearance was totally different. The cloven tongues meant testimony—the power of God in testimony—the word in testimony—that carries everything before it, just like fire which destroys and judges all that comes in its way. And it was not merely a tongue, but each one divided into many, which sat on each disciple. The idea was this—the Spirit of God was there; the testimony of God in grace was no

more to be confined to the Jew, but was to go out to the ends of the earth. The Gentile must hear "the wonderful works of God," no less than the once favoured Jew. The mission of grace which flows from Christ's new position must go out indiscriminately. The fire meant the judgment of what did not suit a holy God. The tongues as of fire set forth God's intolerance of evil. In the sacrifice of the cross all evil had been judged; similarly now what did not suit God and the claims of His holiness was to be condemned. "Fire" is always in Scripture the testing which God's holiness necessarily demands.

"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (ver. 4). This was the promised baptism of the Holy Ghost, which once having taken place is not repeated, though on nine occasions in Acts individuals or companies are said to be "filled with the Holy Ghost." The house was filled; and they were also filled individually with the Holy Ghost, "and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Christ's wonderful Assembly, thus formed by the Spirit and begun to be built, immediately indicates what it exists for—to ring out His praises whom men had despised and rejected, but whom God had exalted as Man to His own right hand.

The church bells, so to speak, begin to ring in the day of its birth. I hear those joy-bells ring in Acts ii., and they pour forth wonderful music, the glories of Jesus. They are not made of molten metal, but of hearts melted by a Saviour's grace, and glad, in the power of the Holy Ghost, to tell His worth. A hundred and twenty bells then rang out the glories of

Christ. The Church was in existence, its foundation laid, and living stones laid upon it, so the bells begin to ring; and soon the world-wide character of its testimony begins to appear, for "devout men, out of every nation under heaven . . . came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language" (vers. 5, 6). The hundred and twenty Spirit-filled disciples were all telling of Jesus. Little wonder that the cosmopolitan multitude marvelled, as they said, "We do hear them speak in our tongues the *wonderful works of God*" (ver. 11). The effect of the testimony was as far reaching as the ends of the earth, and as beautiful as it was God-designed. In the very spot of His rejection, Christ's Assembly—God's newly formed witness to His Son—tells out what Christ has done and who He is. The witness to His death, resurrection, and ascension, as Man, to God's right hand, is perfect.

No one can ponder over this wonderful scene without observing how complete and absolute is the contrast between this scripture and Genesis xi. Babel and Pentecost are as diverse as the poles in their nature, object, and effects. They give the history of the first man and of the Second, as it is written, "Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke xiv. 11). Mark the pride that says: "Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us *make us a name*, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they

have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth" (Gen. xi. 4-9).

There is an immense deal in Scripture about Babylon, and here it begins. God's judgment at Babel by diversity of language confounded the pride of the race that utterly forgot Him, and became confederate in will to exalt itself. Genesis xi. is a most important chapter, for there is more of reliable ethnology in it than anywhere else. God gives us the truth as to ethnology there, and gives the reason also. The pride of men God judges by confounding their language, so that they shall not understand each other, and they are necessarily scattered.

The second of Acts shows how grace can reverse this judgment, because there had been a Man upon earth who never thought of Himself, but only of God and His glory; One who "humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." As a consequence, God has put Him in the spot that man in Genesis xi. could not reach, and the Holy Ghost comes down and temporarily reverses the judgment of Genesis xi. The difference of language was not extirpated, but the divine grace and power which will one day make the world to be of one speech, then lifted the disciples above the

effects of Babel's judgment, and, without learning them, enabled the former to speak in as many languages as their hearers had. That blessed Man Jesus had turned the scales in man's favour. God's answer to the lowly ways of Christ is this—the Holy Ghost comes down, and in this marvellous manner overrules the effects of the sin and pride of the first man, so that those gathered at Jerusalem are compelled to say: "Behold, are not all these which speak Galilæans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?" (vers. 7, 8). The answer to their query is simple. This giving of the Spirit was God's expression of His delight in Christ, as the One who humbled Himself, and the testimony given showed that there was upon the earth now an absolutely new structure, that which Christ had called "My assembly." And what was it here for? Jesus lived here to make God manifest in all His wonderful nature before man; the Church is here to do the same. Hence it is a serious thing to be a professing Christian. Christianity is the continuation of Christ —it is the reproduction of His life in the lives of those who are His—and they are living stones in the building which He builds for this purpose.

An immense stir followed this manifestation of the Holy Ghost's presence on earth. Multitudes came together: "And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine" (vers. 12, 13). Peter replies, "This is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel"—he does not say it is the fulfilment of Joel's prophecy, because it is not. Joel's prophecy will be fulfilled when the Lord comes back to earth by-and-by, and the nations

are brought into blessing in connection with the Jew restored to Palestine. What we have on the day of Pentecost was an anticipative expression of it. The nation had refused and slain Christ—their Messiah—but God had reversed their action, for He had raised Him from the dead, and in heaven had *made* Him both Lord and Christ. Peter and the others had seen Him alive on earth; hence he can say, "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof *we all* are witnesses." Perhaps you have your doubts about the resurrection. Peter had none, and to-day, the man that is converted, and has the Holy Ghost, can give his testimony that he too has seen Jesus. "We see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, crowned with glory and honour" (Heb. ii. 8, 9).

Then comes the explanation of the strange phenomena which the multitude saw and heard. "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear" (ver. 33). Christ received the Holy Ghost twice—first in the day when John baptized Him in Jordan; that was for Himself. But then He died and rose again; and now a second time He receives the Spirit of God, as the ascended Man, for His people, and sheds it forth. By that Spirit He unites His people with Himself; He gives them the same Spirit that He Himself has received, and brings them into association with Himself before His Father.

But the gift of the Holy Ghost is here connected with the responsibility of the nation to bow to the One in glory; hence Peter goes on: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both

Lord and Christ" (ver. 36). Since that ascended Man is Lord and Christ, then every one must bow to Him. "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (vers. 37, 38). Here, without doubt, Peter uses one of those keys which His Master said should be his in Matthew xvi., and he opens the door to the Jew. Notice again that he had not the keys of the Church—we nowhere hear of such in Scripture—but of the kingdom of heaven. God's Church is a heavenly company, though it be formed on earth; and the kingdom is earthly, though it be ordered from heaven. Peter uses here what I have ventured to call the Repentance key.

Why does he call on these Jews to "repent"? Seven weeks before they had clamoured for the Saviour's blood. He says, Go down, and now as publicly own Him as then you denied Him. Confess Him in the waters of baptism to be your Lord and your Messiah, and you will have remission of your sins and receive the Holy Ghost. "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call [a hint of the Gentiles getting in]. And *with many other words* did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation" (vers. 39, 40). These "many other words" meant, I take it, a good, sound, plain preaching, which had most blessed results. Peter was in splendid form that day, because he was full of the Holy Ghost. A

few weeks before he had gone out of the high priest's palace a very dejected man, because, being then full of himself (see Luke xxii. 33), he had boasted what he would do, and immediately after had denied his Master: now, full of the Holy Ghost, he preached boldly and pointedly, and that day the dear simple fisherman won three thousand souls for Christ. "Save yourselves from this untoward generation" was a call to sever themselves from the nation that had slain its Messiah and to get into the city of refuge. Practically the Church of God became "the city of refuge" to every Jew who had imbrued his hand in the blood of his brother—who had helped to slay the Lord.

"Then they that (gladly) received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (ver. 41). It is very doubtful if "gladly" be there (since all the best authorities for the text omit it), because when first convicted of sin before God, a man is grave and thoughtful, not glad. Joy follows in due time. These three thousand souls were then added to the Assembly of God on earth. The one hundred and twenty received them, and thus carried out the injunction given them by the Lord,—"Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them" (John xx. 23). Administratively and in the name of Christ they outwardly remitted the sins of the three thousand, whom He had already forgiven. The very number is suggestive of grace, and is in striking contrast with what occurred when the Jew was placed under law. When the law was given, and broken before ever it reached the camp, Moses came down from God with the two tables of stone in his hand, and dashed them to pieces at the base of the mountain.

The camp had fallen into idolatry, and Moses stood at the gate and said, "Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me." The sons of Levi buckled on the sword, and three thousand men fell, slain (see Exod. xxxii. 15-29). But here grace is triumphant, for Jesus has died, and, atonement for sin effected, is risen from the dead, gone on high, and the Holy Ghost come down; so the day that the Church of God is formed on earth, three thousand men are saved. That evening in Jerusalem there were three thousand one hundred and twenty living stones brought together, and set by the Holy Ghost in the new building Christ was forming.

Of them we read: "And they continued *stedfastly* in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (ver. 42). It is a fine thing to be steadfast. The apostles' "doctrine" was the truth they had received, and fellowship—the common appreciation and enjoyment thereof—the natural outcome of the truth. Then came the breaking of bread—that is the expression of the fellowship; and all was maintained, in a spirit of dependence, by prayer. If you had gone into Jerusalem at that time you would have found a big company at the breaking of bread, and as big a prayer-meeting.

Here then is seen Christ's Assembly, His new building on earth. It had a wonderful birthday, and a wonderful increase in the day of its birth, and it grew steadily on. The growth of the Assembly is really the subject of the Acts of the Apostles. There we get history which shows the working out of God's eternal counsel. "The mystery of Christ" was about to be unfolded, regarding which Paul, Christ's "chosen vessel," wrote later: "Which in other ages was not

made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel; whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of the Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God [not even in Scripture], who created all things by Jesus Christ. To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. iii. 5-11). That shows that the Church is the lesson book of the most exalted created intelligences of the heavens.

That of which Paul here develops the doctrine, became a fact in the Acts, before the doctrine was revealed to him, or made known to any others. Christ's Assembly was to be formed of Jew and Gentile made one—the middle wall of partition having been broken down in the cross. We can understand how divine was the work, as we read, "And the Lord added daily to the assembly such as should be saved" (Acts ii. 47).

The effect of Peter's second sermon (Acts iii.)—spite of strong opposition—is, "Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand" (Acts iv. 4). That chapter presents a lovely sight, a prayerful and consequently a powerful Assembly. "They were all filled with the

Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart, and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with *great power* gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and *great grace* was upon them all" (iv. 31-33). What a beautiful testimony to the power of love, the love of God which the Holy Ghost had shed abroad in their heart—the *one heart* that marked them. The Spirit was then ungrieved and the Assembly unsoiled; love reigned and holy liberty showed itself in practical life—the fruits of the Spirit being seen everywhere. Charming spectacle! For the moment the Lord's repeated prayer of John xvii.—as to His own being one—was blessedly answered. Would that it had continued!

In Acts v. the history of Ananias and Sapphira tells us that the flesh is always in the Christian, and that God by His Spirit is in the Assembly. They forgot both facts. God dwelt in the midst of His own Assembly, knew everything, however carefully attempted to be concealed, and would not permit evil where He dwelt. The guilty pair died, God by His judgment maintaining the consistency of the Assembly with His holy presence, before that discipline had been formally committed to it, with this result, that "*great fear* came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things. . . . And of the rest durst no man join himself to them" (vers. 11, 13). God's Assembly was felt to be intensely holy, and people were not then in the hurry to "join the Church" that is evident in our day. They felt that not only was *new* life a preliminary necessity, in order to

enter the Assembly, but that a *holy* life was necessary therein as alone consistent with the presence of God in His House.

Fear of entering the Assembly was soon followed by "a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem," while, "as for Saul, he made havoc of the church" (Acts viii. 1-3). This, so far from stopping God's work, only really helped it on, for "they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word" (ver. 4). This dispersion led Philip to Samaria, where we see that vast numbers of the semi-heathen Samaritans, whom the law had failed to conquer, were reached and saved by the gospel preached by Philip. God in that instance carefully maintains the unity of the Assembly, by not giving the Spirit till Peter and John appear on the scene, who thus link up the work in Samaria with what already pre-existed in Jerusalem. Although converted and baptized, the Samaritan believers do not receive the Holy Ghost till the apostles pray for and lay their hands upon them. Without doubt the reason for this is plain. The Church was one, the work one; one Head in heaven, one Spirit on earth; one body, one Assembly—not two, Jewish and Samaritan, with their religious rivalry of long standing perpetuated in Christianity. The bare idea of a "national Church" or an "independent Church"—so likely to spring up in the circumstances, and so familiar to our eyes in this day—is distinctly negatived by God's action through the apostles. "That they may be one" was the Lord's prayer in John xvii., and here unity is beautifully maintained, we again see.

In the ninth of Acts we have the wonderful tale of Saul's conversion. This "chosen vessel" must now

be brought on the scene. His bygone history gave no indication of what he was to be, but the apostle of God's fullest grace to the uncircumcision, *i.e.*, the Gentiles, is to be made out of the apostle of man's deepest hatred against Christ. The Great Potter (see Jer. xviii. 1-6) was about to lay hold of a very unlikely-looking lump of clay and transform it. Till now that "chosen vessel" had been in the Potter's mind—henceforth the Potter's mind would be in the vessel. An immense difference, but one which every Gentile reached by Paul's ministry will eternally thank God for. On his way to Damascus, "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, . . . suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven; and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (ver. 1-4). Felled by the glory of Christ, that voice in his mother-tongue revealed the Lord to him, while declaring that His disciples were one with Himself. In a moment his career of self-will is over for ever, and "Who art thou, Lord?" is the query of a man whose mind is subdued and whose pride is broken. He learns that the Lord of Glory is Jesus of Nazareth, and that all Christians are united with Himself—they are members of His body—in germ the revelation of the mystery He was to unfold. A self-emptied and for the time blinded man, he hears words which gave him his new commission: "Rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people (Jews) and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and

to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts xxvi. 16-18).

That commission he is seen carrying out in chapter xiii. and onwards; but in the interval the Gentiles receive blessing, and first enter the portals of the Assembly through Peter's ministry. This we find in Acts x. The promises of God had been given to the Jews—none to the Gentiles. But promise is *measured* grace, and that limited to one people. God's nature is wider far than His promise—I might even say than His counsel. He would have *all* men to be saved, so now sends the gospel to all; that is His nature. Counsel, which chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, ensures that some shall receive and be blessed by that gospel. God was thinking about the Gentiles, and now admits some of them to His Assembly without becoming Jews. Quite independently of them He sends an angel to Cornelius, an exercised, devout, God-fearing Roman officer, who did not yet know his sins forgiven, and who had not peace. He is bidden to send for Peter.

While the messengers of Cornelius are on their way to call Peter, God teaches him by the "great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to earth; wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air" (vers. 11, 12), that what He has cleansed Peter is not to regard as common. Thus instructed Peter soon finds himself in the company of the Gentiles, which hitherto had been unlawful to a Jew. Further, he perceives that "God is no respecter of

persons: but in *every nation* he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (vers. 34, 35).

This leads on to a beautiful declaration of the gospel to the Gentiles, which culminates in the statement, regarding the Lord Jesus, that "to him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever *believeth* in him shall receive remission of sins" (ver. 43). This blessed truth was received by simple faith in the heart of Cornelius and his friends, and the Holy Ghost immediately sealed that faith, for "while Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word" (ver. 44), and he and his six Jewish fellow-travellers "heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God" (ver. 46).

The grace of God in this scene sparkles brilliantly. That which the one hundred and twenty received on the day of Pentecost, the Gentile converts here receive, viz., the gift of the Holy Ghost, and that—thus differing both from the Jewish three thousand in Acts ii., and the Samaritan multitude in Acts viii.—without either baptism, prayer, or laying on of the apostle's hands. God had received them, and sealed them with His Spirit, hence it were impossible not to receive them into God's Assembly, of which they really now formed an integral part. Accordingly Peter commands them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. By that act they were formally received amongst the Christians, and the true, normal aspect of the body of Christ as it affected the Gentiles, began to be brought into view. They stood, by faith in Christ dead and risen, on Christian ground before God, and as such ceased to be Gentiles, equally as much as the believing and baptized Jews ceased to be Jews—

for each are viewed as being in Christ before God, and part of the new structure which Jesus called "My assembly."

Thus did the Gentiles become "fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel," and the component parts of that body are seen walking together thenceforth—as the Assembly of God continued to grow.

It is noticeable that Peter, the apostle of the circumcision, in a way anticipates Paul's work, in thus going to the Gentiles, whose apostle the latter was. Thus does God mingle the work of His workmen, even as later Paul writes to the Hebrews who were Peter's chief care. But there was also this in it, that by his preaching at Cæsarea, as I believe, Peter used the second of "the keys of the kingdom of heaven," opening the door to the *believing* Gentiles — who, through faith and reception of the Holy Ghost, thereby also had their place in the Assembly.

It is of vital moment to see that water-baptism brings one only into the place of profession, not into the Church. It is the reception of the Holy Ghost that brings one into the Assembly of God. The confounding of these two things has led to the existing condition of confusion in Christendom. Any who are baptized with water are supposed thereby to be made children of God, members of Christ and inheritors of the kingdom. Such is not the teaching of Scripture. Vital Christianity consists in the reception of the Holy Ghost, and no one can confer that gift save the Lord—the assumption of so-called apostolic successors notwithstanding. The last chapter we have been considering shows that the intervention of an apostle, and laying on of his hands, in the reception of the

Holy Ghost—and that in the first great Gentile case —was in no way necessary. The Gentile then and now receives the Spirit by the hearing of faith (Gal. iii. 2), and by that reception is united to Christ as a member of His body, and has his place in the Assembly of God — a blessed truth, most clearly stated by Paul when he wrote, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. xii. 13).

Thus and thus only is the Assembly, the body of Christ, formed.

LECTURE III.

The House of God.

(Eph. ii. 18-22; 1 Tim. iii. 14-16.)

IN the New Testament the Assembly of God is presented under four figures—a House, a Body, a Candlestick, and a Bride. Each figure suggests a different idea. The House of God is where He dwells—the relationship of the Assembly to God; the Body of Christ is its relationship to Christ, that by which His life, taken from the earth, is now to be expressed here; the Candlestick is to carry the light the Spirit gives—the responsible vessel of testimony for Christ on earth during His absence; while the Bride is more connected with what is heavenly and eternal, when the Assembly, the object of the affection of Christ, will be for ever with Him who is the Bridegroom. This latter truth presents the final destiny of the Assembly, for "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. v. 25-27). And in the day when the last component part of the Assembly shall have been brought in, by the blessed

activity of the Spirit of God, the Bride will be taken home by the Lord to be with Himself for ever; a very bright hope to the heart of the Christian. But there it will never cease to be "the fulness of him that filleth all in all," as the Body (Eph. i. 23), or the dwelling-place of God, as the House.

Now I will take up the subject of the House of God. Although presented in an entirely new way in the New Testament, we have the thought and truth of the house in Old Testament days. From the moment of Israel's redemption out of Egypt, the thought of God dwelling in the midst of His people appears. He did not dwell with Adam; He paid him a visit, and retired. He might, and did, in His grace, visit certain of His saints, as recorded in the book of Genesis; but when you come to Exodus, the book of redemption, immediately the people are out of Egypt (the world typically), and upon redemption ground before God, the thought of the Lord having a habitation upon earth, where He could dwell, is presented to us.

The first intimation of this is in Exodus xv., when the Song of redemption is rolling in majestic volume from the lips of God's delivered people, on the shores of the Red Sea, where they were typically, by the death and resurrection of Christ, in the joy of having been brought to God. They say, "The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation" (ver. 2). In the bosom of the people somehow the idea sprang up that God meant to dwell with them. Passing on in Exodus you find that God answered this by saying to Moses, "Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them" (xxv. 8).

Then giving Moses instructions as to the Tabernacle and all its furniture, God was careful to say, "According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it" (Exod. xxv. 9)—instructions which the many church-makers in Christendom would do well to heed to-day.

The pattern of the Tabernacle was kept on high, in heavenly glory. When Moses went up into the mount, and spent those forty days with God, the people thought he was going to get the law. Not that alone. He had gone to get God's mind and to see lovely pictures of Christ. He received the tables of stone, but far better than that he saw many shadows of Christ. He walked through God's picture gallery, and saw all that is summarised in Exodus xxxi. 7-11. The Tabernacle and all its furniture spoke of Christ in some aspect or other. I do not say that Moses apprehended the full meaning of all that passed before his eye, but ere he came down from the mount God said, "And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount" (xxv. 40). That is surely a lesson for us. If we are going to learn anything about God's habitation (and we are now inquiring about the Church, for men are wonderful church-makers), let us see that we get our eyes on the heavenly pattern. The importance of this is manifest, for these Old Testament details of the Tabernacle building and furniture, were, says Paul, "the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount" (Heb. viii. 5). Moses implicitly obeyed his

instructions, for in Exodus xxxix. and xl. we read no less than sixteen times that all was done "as the Lord commanded Moses." Happy and wise servant!

God's object in having the Tabernacle reared is very distinctly stated: "I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar: I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to me in the priest's office" (Exod. xxix. 44). Aaron and his sons were a type of Christ and the Church, brought into beautiful nearness to God, for every Christian, besides being a living stone, is a priest. We see that in 1 Peter ii. 5, "Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." These two thoughts go together in Scripture; and here in Exodus you get the first suggestion of them, a dwelling-place for Himself, where God could have those near Him who would minister to Him, and meet His heart and mind. Hence the blessed statement which follows: "And I will *dwell* among the children of Israel, and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the Lord their God" (Exod. xxix. 45, 46). God says, Let them clearly understand why I have brought them out of Egypt—it is that I might dwell among them. Separation from the world is a prime necessity to secure God's presence.

But why did God separate them? Why would He not dwell with them in Egypt? How could He, in a scene of idolatry? He must bring them out, and separate them; and when Moses was going to bring them out, Pharaoh—type of Satan's energy, as prince of the world, then as now—contested every inch of the road,

and proposed, when hard pressed, a series of compromises. Moses said to him, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me *in the wilderness*" (Exod. v. 1). Pharaoh said, "Go ye, sacrifice to your God *in the land*" (Exod. viii. 25), *i.e.*, set up worldly worship. Moses replies, "We will go *three days' journey* into the wilderness, and sacrifice to the Lord our God, as he shall command us" (ver. 27). Then said Pharaoh, "I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness; only ye shall not go *very far away*" (ver. 28), *i.e.*, don't be very separate. The next question was, "Go, serve the Lord your God: but *who* are they that shall go?" Moses replies, "We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go; for we must hold a feast unto the Lord" (Exod. x. 8, 9). Pharaoh rejoins, "Not so; go now ye that are men" (ver. 11). This means the parents may be for the Lord, but the children must be kept in the world. Moses carries this point, however, and Pharaoh reluctantly says, "Go ye, serve the Lord; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed: let your *little ones* also go with you" (ver. 24). This meant, take the children but leave your goods—or run your business on worldly lines. Moses' answer was grand: "Our cattle shall also go with us; there shall not an hoof be left behind" (ver. 26). And in Exodus xii. 32 Pharaoh cedes the flocks and herds also. The devil knows that out-and-out separation from the world is what must mark God's people, if they are to be fit for God's company, and He to bless them with His presence. Hence Satan's persistent effort to hinder their escape from the world.

The moment they were out, God says, I am going to dwell among you. Then the Tabernacle was reared; and by-and-by the Temple was built. It was called God's House, His glory filled it, and any one in that day who sought God must go to that Temple —that was where He was to be found. And that is why the Ethiopian eunuch went up to Jerusalem, because he thought God was there. He went to the spot where he thought God could be found, but he came away disappointed. Why? God was not there then. Failure, sin, and idolatry had come in, and God had disowned His earthly people, and forsaken His House, the Temple. Ezekiel tells us (chaps. ix. and x.) how His glory, which had so blessedly filled the House of the Lord in Solomon's day (see 1 Kings viii. 10, 11), began to depart. It was very reluctant to go, and moved from the cherubim to the threshold, thence to the east side of the city, upon the Mount of Olives, then it took its upward departure, and God's House was empty. Was it not refilled? Never; it was burned by Nebuchadnezzar.

The remnant of the Jews who came back, with Ezra and Nehemiah, rebuilt the Temple, but we have no account of the glory filling it. Ezekiel tells us (chap. xliv.) that it will come back by-and-by to an earthly house yet to be built in Palestine; but we have no account of the glory or presence of the Lord revisiting the earth, until one starry night to a number of shepherds, who were keeping their sheep in the fields of Bethlehem, the angel of the Lord appears, the glory of the Lord shines round about them, and they hear the wonderful tidings, that in Bethlehem, the city of David, that day there had been born to them "a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." When

the Son of God became incarnate, the glory of the Lord revisited the earth in connection with His birth and life.

And what was the Temple then? Was the glory in Herod's Temple? No, it was hid beneath "the veil, that is to say, his flesh," but there it was, in that Man. You remember what He Himself said in John ii. Man is naturally a religious creature, and will go on with form, ceremony, and ordinances, when all life has departed out of them. The Jewish ritual was maintained, but God had departed, He was not there. Then it was that "Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting. And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise" (John ii. 13-16). That shows what God's professed House could come to—a place of merchandise and money—and is it not so to-day in Christendom? History repeats itself.

"And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up. Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy *this temple*, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of *the temple of his body*" (John ii. 17-21).

Where then was the Temple of God? In His

Person, a Man on earth, sealed with the Holy Ghost. It was not only that He was God's Son—that He was Emmanuel, God with us; but more than that—He was anointed with the Holy Ghost, and He "went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him" (Acts x. 38). In Jesus' blessed body God was moving here along the earth for three and a half years of public ministry, and if any one sought then to know God, he must go to Jesus. God still dwells on earth to-day, only now it is not Jesus that is upon earth, but collectively His people, who by the Spirit are His temple—as we shall see—and further He Himself is in their midst.

You do not get the knowledge of God now except in connection with what He calls His Assembly, in some way or other. It might be in a desert place (see Acts viii. 26-40), through the ministry of some servant, who is an integral part of the Assembly; or it might be in the bosom of the gathered Assembly, as Paul says, "But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth" (1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25). He recognises the presence of God in the midst of His people.

In Matthew xxi., where the Lord cleanses the Temple, similar to the action which John gives, at the beginning of His ministry, He said to those whom He drove out a second time, "It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves" (Matt. xxi. 13). Quoting an Old Testament scripture (Isa. lvi. 7), He calls it "*my*

house" there, only to show how utterly had man in responsibility failed, touching divine things; what God designed as a place of prayer, man had made to be a den of thieves. It only shows what divine things can become in the hands of man, so corrupt is he in the moral springs of his being. Two days afterwards He said: "Behold, *your* house is left unto you desolate"—not "my house" now, but "your house"—"For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matt. xxiii. 38, 39). As to the house where God was supposed to be, He has to say, It is "desolate"—He is not there.

The next thing is the Lord is slain, the Messiah is refused, He is put to death by His own people—the house is empty, and the grave is filled. Then He is raised from the dead, ascends on high, the Holy Ghost comes down, and the first effect is that He filled the house where the disciples were, and sat upon each one. That filling of the house carries with it the deeper thought of the House in which God dwells, *i.e.*, the Assembly looked at corporately. The body of the individual believer is equally said to be the temple of the Holy Ghost. There is no doubt as to the corporate thing, because we read, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor. iii. 16). The Assembly of God in Corinth Paul here distinctly calls "the temple of God." In the same epistle, he says, of individual Christians: "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20). Thus we get the collective

side of the truth, and find all believers on earth at this moment united in one spiritual building as the Temple of God that man does not see.

You may put up a building that man can see, and call it a church; but that is not the thought of Scripture. There is upon earth what God calls His Assembly, His House, His Temple. It is there where He now dwells; and none compose that but God's own children, who have been born of the Spirit, led to believe on the Son of God, are washed in the blood of Christ, and sealed by the Spirit also. Looked at collectively they are God's Temple, where He dwells, and there is immense privilege connected with that.

When the individual believer is looked at as the Temple of the Holy Ghost—which is true as to his body, because he is sealed by the Spirit—he must walk carefully for that very reason. If he go into associations unsuitable to the Lord, he takes the Holy Spirit with him; for this blessed Spirit does not *leave* him, as He is the earnest of our inheritance until redemption is put forth in power unto the purchased possession (Eph. i. 13, 14). The indwelling of the Spirit of God in the body of each believer is indeed a wonderful truth, and the Christian must be careful not to grieve Him. He will not *leave* us, therefore we must take care not to *grieve* Him, which is the purport of the exhortation, "*Grieve* not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are *sealed* unto the day of redemption" (Eph. iv. 30).

We must be careful not to confuse the truth of the House of God—with which responsibility is connected—with the truth of the Body of Christ, which develops our privileges as members thereof according to the counsel of God, for Christ is the Head of a body, every

member of which is in vital union with Him by the Holy Ghost. This could not be said of every one now who is of the House of God in its responsible aspect. All baptized professors of Christ are professedly there; but the Body is composed of real believers, united by the Holy Ghost to the living, ascended Man in glory—the Head, who has His Body on the earth.

Any one who is a member of the Body of Christ is an integral part of Christ. If you belong to Him, you are part of Him. That is why it says, "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is *Christ*" (1 Cor. xii. 12). If I had written that chapter I should probably have said, "So also is the Church." God there calls the Church Christ. In Genesis v., where God speaks about Adam and Eve, it says, "Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called *their* name Adam" (ver. 2). It is the same thought, that the Bride and Bridegroom are one—Christ and the Church are one. In the Body of Christ everything is real, because no one can be a member of the Body of Christ without being a true Christian, born and sealed of the Spirit. But there might be in that which has its responsibility as the House of God to-day, those who have nothing to do with Christ save by profession. (See 2 Tim. ii., iii.)

On the day of Pentecost the House of God and the Body of Christ were co-extensive. All was real. The stones in the House were the members of the Body, for they all had the Holy Ghost; and this is still true of the divine work, Christ's building. But the House as committed to man's responsibility has widened out so as to include an immense mass of lifeless profession in Christendom. We have already

seen how the Assembly grew, as believers in Samaria, in Cæsarea, and then among the Gentiles, came in. The introduction of a new labourer, a wise master builder in God's building, Paul, marked a notable day in the Assembly's history. He brought out what had been hidden till then—"the mystery"—which was that Jew and Gentile, wrought in by grace, born of God, and sealed by the Spirit, are made one in Christ, and united to Him who is the Head, at God's right hand. It may help you to get hold of the truth of the Assembly being the Body of Christ if you see this—that the Head of the Church was never dead. He who is Head of the Church *was* dead—He died as Messiah and Man; but He never was Head of the Church till He was alive from the dead.

When did Adam become the head of a race? As a fallen sinner, out of Eden, then he begat his family. When does Christ become Head of the Church? Not till He goes to God's right hand, and the Holy Ghost comes down; then this wonderful new structure is formed, which is to enjoy God, and display Christ. All this was the result of the Spirit being here personally, founded on Christ being glorified. If you read the Acts you will be struck with the thought that there is not only a mighty influence, but a divine Person dwelling here upon earth. Ananias had "lied to the Holy Ghost"—"not to men but to God" (Acts v.). The Spirit could say to Philip, "Go near, and join thyself to this chariot" (Acts viii. 29). To the prophets of the Assembly at Antioch "the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them" (Acts xiii. 2), and then sent

them out on that wonderful missionary tour amongst the Gentiles. Again, Paul was "forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia" (Acts xvi. 6), because He wanted to send him into Europe with the gospel. All this shows that there was a divine Presence dwelling in this new structure, here upon earth. God's Assembly was God's House, which He built, and in which He dwelt.

If a man build a house he can do one of three things—he can sell it, let it, or live in it. God neither sold, nor let His House—He came to live in it; and that is a wonderful truth for a Christian to see. It puts a new character on the Assembly, and makes me ask myself if I have ever really taken in the words, "In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom *ye* also are *builded together* for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. ii. 21, 22). The habitation of God through the Spirit is what the Assembly is now, while God's work is going on, and the final thought is, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God," as seen in Revelation xxi.—that is the completed building—what it is growing to now, when all will be perfectly according to His mind in the new heavens and earth. In Acts xix., Paul found a company of twelve, who had been baptized with John's baptism, and had not heard about the Holy Ghost having come. "And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied," and the Assembly of God was locally formed in Ephesus. A wonderful work went on, and

eventually there came to them the beautiful epistle, bearing their name, which is occupied with unfolding the truth of God as to "the mystery." The Ephesian believers are there told that they "are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" (ii. 20). No builder is here named. Are not the apostles the builders? Not according to this scripture—they are themselves stones: "The foundation of the apostles and prophets"—the truth which they, the apostles and prophets *of the New Testament* brought out, appears to me to be that on which our faith reposes, "Christ himself being the chief corner stone."

Now see what an important thing the House of God is. People think it is some place where they go, so they take off their hats, and I have no objection to that. It is done out of reverence, and if there be one thing that should mark God's Assembly it is reverence, and I am sure we are not so marked by that as we might be. It is impossible to over-estimate the magnificence of the truth that the Assembly is the habitation of God through the Spirit. If we were summoned to the palace and presence of King Edward VII., there would be a kind of behaviour suited to the occasion; and if we remember that God's people are His habitation through the Spirit, it will produce a gravity in my mind and yours, that perhaps has not always been present there. Get hold of what it is to be the habitation of God through the Spirit. Where is it to be seen to-day? Alas, it is not in evidence. It is composed of all God's people to-day, though they are scattered in the divers so-called "churches" of Christendom, not walking together, to our sorrow and shame, be it said. The Assembly of God to-day

in any place, is *all* the people of God in that place, and none others—not *any few*, however they may assume to be the Assembly. All mere professors are outside the divine work of the House of God, however they may have the solemn responsibility of their place in it as committed to human builders.

If you, my hearer, have not been truly converted, born of God, washed from your sins by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and sealed by the Spirit of God, having experienced what Christ speaks of as the baptism of the Holy Ghost, by which all are baptized into one body, and cemented into one spiritual building—you are outside, and your name of Christian is absolutely valueless, save that you cannot free yourself from the responsibility that attaches to it. I beg all unconverted professors of Christ to ponder the path of their feet, because there is coming a day when the Lord must reject what is unreal. Even in Peter's day the time had come when judgment must begin at the House of God. That of which I have been speaking is real, what God builds, what the Spirit forms, and what the world does not see. Happy is he or she who isa living stone in that building.

While we are passing on through this scene, where Christ was rejected, there is a spot where He can come and dwell—the Assembly, which is divinely constructed. Do you think an unconverted person is there, an unregenerate man? No; though it is quite possible for such to intermingle with those who constitute that Assembly. The Assembly of the living God is that which is the fruit of His own blessed grace. To men once dead in sins, by His Spirit's activity He has communicated life. Through the knowledge of Christ dead and risen, they have received the Spirit

of God as the witness of the forgiveness of their sins, and all such have become an integral part of the Assembly of the living God.

We are brought there into the region of life, freshness, brightness, joy, perennial gladness, peace with God, enjoyment of God, and apprehension of His love. It is indeed a wonderful thing to be an integral part of the Assembly of the living God. You ask me who form it. All the saints of God on earth to-day. Every saint may not know it, but such is the fact, and what I desire is, to wake up in every believer's heart an increased sense of the blessedness of being part of God's Assembly. If I get the sense of what that is, I shall have then the thought, I must get clear of the world, I must be separate if I am going to answer at all to God's thought for His people.

Now let us turn to 1 Timothy iii., where Paul gives us remarkable instruction in regard to God's House. It was possible for Timothy or others to behave very badly in it. It is the aspect of the House to which I have referred where man has his responsibility. In writing to Timothy he says, "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. iii. 14, 15).

The first thought is the House; the second, the Church; the third, the pillar and ground of the truth. The House of God is where He dwells here on earth.

The Assembly is then "the pillar and ground of the truth"—what is that? A pillar is what supports and holds up a thing. And how is the Church to be the pillar—does the Church teach? Never in Scripture.

The Church is taught. Who teaches then? The Spirit teaches through gifts, through servants of the Lord whom He uses as the gifts of Christ to His Body, the Church; but you never find that the Church teaches. The Assembly, as "the pillar and ground of the truth," is to maintain and uphold the truth by its confession and testimony, to contend for it against all gainsayers, because she has it. When Christ was on earth He was the truth, and now, though hidden in God, He is still the truth; but the Assembly knows Christ, and is the maintainer of the truth on earth where Christ is not. The Assembly is not the truth, the Spirit of God is that. She maintains the truth on earth. She is God's witness to present the truth to men. When she is removed by-and-by, at the Lord's coming, the truth will have disappeared from the earth, and men will believe a lie (see 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12). The Assembly, as set up by God on the earth, is the pillar and ground of the truth, and what does not present and maintain the truth is not God's Assembly. Everything connected with Christ and His glory is of vital interest and deepest importance to the Assembly. What she maintains before the world is essentially connected with the Person of Christ, the living centre of all truth. Hence she will give up nothing of the truth.

You see men to-day give up this, that, and the other part of Scripture. Is this being true to the responsibility of the Assembly as the pillar and ground of the truth? It is the worst unfaithfulness. The Assembly of God was set in this place to hold tenaciously to the truth, for it centres and finds its fulness in Christ and His Person, and what touches the truth in any part of it touches Him. That is the

meaning of the next verse: "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1 Tim. iii. 16). That was Christ. God, the object of their worship, was never seen of angels till His Son became incarnate. What happened when people believed on Him in the world? They came out of it—the discovery of Christ brought them out of the world, as a moral system that God is going to judge. He who was the Temple of God when here is gone from this scene, and what has God been pleased to leave here in His stead? He has sent down the Holy Ghost, and He has formed a new Temple. Sinners saved by grace, out of Jew and Gentile, are, by the reception of the Holy Ghost, formed into a holy and beautiful House where God dwells. Those who form that House are attached to Christ, love His name, and maintain His truth in the day of His rejection. That is what the House of God in its normal character should be.

How far the Church has departed from this, you know very well. It has failed; man has failed everywhere in responsibility. And now we shall briefly look at how what God formed as His own habitation has become that great outward thing called Christendom, which as such is hastening on to the judgment of God, while all the time there is the real work of God being carried on in it, which is growing to and will result in an holy Temple in the Lord as we have seen. Turn to 1 Corinthians iii. 9, "For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building." The Corinthian Assembly, formed by Paul's ministry, was God's building; and looked

at broadly and largely Christendom is the House of God; only we must not in our minds connect with the House all the privileges which belong to the Body of Christ. In the Body all is real; in the House, in this aspect of it, much is mere profession. It is because people were taught that any one baptized was made "a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven," that there has come in all the unreality and confusion that is in Christendom to-day. Members of Christ's Body are those who have been the subjects of the work of Christ. Baptism of the Holy Ghost brings you into the Body. Water baptism only brings you into the House by profession, but that carries with it responsibility, for God is going shortly to judge it. That is why the apostle Peter wrote: "Judgment must begin at the house of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" (1 Pet. iv. 17). You must not shut your eyes to that. The House of God, as Peter sees it in this chapter, will come in for judgment. God acted similarly in Israel's day (see Jer. xxv. 29; Ezek. ix. 6). The Christian profession has not remained faithful to God, and Paul says it will be cut off (see Rom. xi. 21, 22).

Speaking of man as a builder, Paul says: "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon" (1 Cor. iii. 10). Nobody could lay a foundation in Corinth—Paul had laid it; the foundation was Christ. He had come and told them of Christ dead and risen—and thus laid the foundation. Others might follow, and preach

or teach in the Lord's name. Then the apostle describes what might be built by men in responsibility, and points out three classes of builders. "Now, if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; *every man's work shall be made manifest:* for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is" (vers. 12, 13). The teaching might be solid or worthless, but souls are formed by it. Doctrine influences men's souls. What is really of God will stand, and the reverse be destroyed.

Fire will not destroy the gold, silver, or precious stones; but what about the wood, hay, and stubble? The fire must of necessity destroy them. What is thus built refers to the doctrines, good or bad, by which souls were introduced to the Assembly, some good and really the work of God, others lifeless and dead, induced by vain doctrine to take the ground of the profession of Christ. Every man that takes the name of the Lord on his lips will be tested, and—solemn reflection for all Church builders and Christian workers—every one taking the place of being Christ's servant will be tried, and his work also.

Now see the three classes of builders in the result:—First, "If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall *receive a reward*" (ver. 14). What is that? The man is saved, and his work stands. His work is according to God, and he is rewarded. Second, "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall *suffer loss:* but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (ver. 15). The man is saved, but his work is all lost; there is no reward. Now if I have been busy building up a state of things, and find out in the

day of the Lord it has all been a mistake, what loss I shall suffer. That is a serious consideration for every Christian. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (ver. 16) is the solemn preface to the third class of builders here spoken of. "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (ver. 17). The man is lost, and his work is lost.

The point of the passage is ministerial labour expressed by various doctrines, and seen by their fruits to be either good, worthless, and vain, or utterly subversive of the truth of God as the case might be; and three cases are given. The first man is saved, and his work stands—all is good. The second man is saved, for the workman was a child of God, but his work was unintelligent and vain, hence his work is lost. The third man is lost, and his work burned up. He was a corrupter of God's Temple which is holy. This scripture should surely cause every serious man to ask himself, "Have I God's mind in what I am building?" To miss this is to ensure nothing but absolute ruin, failure, and destruction in the day of the Lord, so far as the work is concerned, though the workman be saved. The third case given here contemplates manifestly an unconverted servant, an imitator of "Noah's Carpenters"—people who may have helped to build the ark, and yet were not inside it when the judgment fell. Friend, are you one of this kind? Are you busy in Christ's things and have not yet been born again? You should ponder this passage carefully, for clearly its teaching makes Christian service a very serious thing.

Many other scriptures present the House of God as

being built by man in responsibility. We see this particularly in Paul's Epistles to Timothy, the first of which we have already glanced at. The first epistle presents *the truth*, and shows us things *in order* in God's House. In the second epistle *error* had come in, the truth been given up, and things had got into great *disorder*, and the man of God gets instruction how to behave when all is in disorder. There we read: "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. ii. 19).

What God builds will abide, and although all the Lord's people in any locality to-day do not know each other, yet the Lord knows them all. They ought to know each other, and, if they are set to really follow the Lord, they will soon find each other out. Dear old Anna knew all the Lord's people in Jerusalem and "*spake of him* to *all them* that looked for redemption in Jerusalem" (Luke ii. 36-38). She was over a hundred years of age, but was as energetic as she was devoted, being a real child of her father. She was an Asherite, and of him it was written: "Let Asher be blessed with children; let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil. Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be" (Deut. xxxiii. 24, 25). Her foot was dipped in oil—Holy Ghost energy—truly. The children of God ought to know each other—they are all of one family, one Father, one House, one Body, and they will all be together by-and-by.

God's house has now outwardly become as "a great house," with much in it that is not of God, as it is written, "But in a great house there are not only

vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour" (ver. 20).

The professing Church in this passage is looked at as a great house, it is all that which calls itself Christian, and every Christian, spite of himself, is of and cannot get out of it. He can, however, cleanse himself from that which dishonours the Lord, and is bound to do so if he will walk in faithfulness, and seeks to be a vessel unto honour and fit for the Lord to use.

"Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity," is the divine injunction in a day of evil, and the way to show real love to God's saints, in an evil day, is to maintain the truth at all costs, at its full level. This is the rule of Christian faithfulness. What dishonours Christ the true heart departs from. We are not called to put other people right, each individual must put himself right. The responsibility of the individual never ceases, and if the nominal Church has departed from the truth so much the more need for me to know what it is and act upon it. If I know a thing is wrong, I am done with it, by the grace of God. I am not going to associate myself with what is iniquity.

"But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour and some to dishonour" (ver. 20) describes most graphically what God's house would become. It has come to be a great house—having many rooms, many compartments. When such is the case we are told what to do.

"If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for

the master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (ver. 21). To "purge himself" is the first duty of the faithful follower of the Lord. People say, "Why do you not try to put things right?" I have only to put myself right, because I am not competent to put others right. You put yourself right, and then you will help other people, and that is what *I* am trying to do. I do thank God for any little bit of light He has given me on His Word, and I am trying to share it. If I purge myself from what is not according to God, and does not suit Christ, I shall be a "vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use," and so also will you. But there is a moral state needed for Christ to take either you or me up and use us.

We have now seen that the truth of the house of God is very important and blessed, and it all turns on the presence of the Holy Ghost here. The people of God are put and held together, and in its normal state there is not an unconverted one inside—they are all outside. The inmates of God's house are in a wonderful place of privilege. No one knows me that does not live in my house. It is only those who really get into God's house that know Him. There is nothing more blessed than that.

You know the Lord, and by separation from all that is unsuited to His name you can be in the enjoyment of the Lord in the midst of His temple. What has the unconverted man to do with that? Nothing. He is outside. Shall we leave him there? No, by all means try and reach him. Go out and preach the gospel to him. Get him converted. Then show him the way in, to know God, and enjoy Him, and wake up to find himself "a living stone" in Christ's building. Regarding every such case I say, thank God, another

stone is added, and it is beautiful to see how God's building is growing.

On the other hand, men have built up an immense mass of profession that must all come down. Christendom is a mass of confusion. What men call the church is no guide. Yet there is a path and a guide. You and I must learn to pick our way in a day like this by hearkening to what God says in His Word. Well said the apostle Paul: "I commend you to God, and the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts xx. 32).

LECTURE IV.

Established and Endowed.

(Acts xx. 28-36; 1 Cor. xii. 1-11, 28-31; 2 Cor. i. 21, 22.)

IT is abundantly plain in Scripture that God's Assembly is both established and endowed. If anybody asks me whether I belong to the "Established Church," I always say "Yes," most emphatically. If they ask me "Which?" I say simply "God's"—every other I disown, because I do not find it in Scripture. I could not be a member of anything which is not God's Assembly, for, being a member of it, I cannot, in simple subjection to the truth, acknowledge any other membership. To be of it is enough. God's Assembly He has established, and established well, I hope to show from Scripture, and likewise that it is endowed, marvellously endowed, for its endowment is the Holy Ghost—not money.

Now it is noticeable that the apostle Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, addresses both his epistles to "the church of God which is at Corinth." You may not, however, have observed that the address of the first epistle is to you and me. Read it: "Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, unto *the church of God which is at Corinth*, to them that are

sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, *with all* that *in every place* call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours" (1 Cor. i. 1, 2). So that, if you call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, you see this epistle has its application, and is directed to you as much as to the Corinthians. What God has taught us in this epistle is therefore as binding upon our consciences and hearts as on the first company that received it.

They were called "the assembly of God." There is no other local company of saints in all the New Testament which is so addressed, or to whom an epistle comes with this inscription. In the second epistle a similar address is found: it is, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto *the church of God which is at Corinth*, with all the saints which are in all Achaia." The latter were, for special reasons, embraced by the ministry to be found in the second epistle. I think this manner of address is very important, because this epistle came to "God's Assembly" in that city, and that Assembly included every saint in Corinth. Now if a letter came addressed "To the Assembly of God in Edinburgh," I fear that the postal officials would have some difficulty in knowing where to deliver it. They might say, Oh, well, give it to such *a* Church. But I should say, No, that will not do, that is not *the* Church. And if they said, Then will *you* take it? I should say, Oh dear no—I and those with whom I am in happy fellowship—*we* are not the Church of God. I trust we are of it, and seeking to walk according to its plainly written instructions in Scripture, but we are not it.

What is the Church of God in Edinburgh? All the saints in Edinburgh—*they* are the Assembly of God in Edinburgh to-day. In that day at Corinth the saints were united, and all together, instead of being, as, alas, saints are to-day, divided. The postman at Corinth had not a bit of difficulty—the bearer of these letters would soon find the Assembly of God. If he asked for them he might be told, It is those queer people, who meet by themselves—keep themselves out of the world, and are a separate, holy company. Would that we all were that to-day, for then the people of God would have much more power in dealing with the world, in God's interests, than is now the case, the existence of an "Established Church" notwithstanding.

Now I am not concerned with what men have established—I am not at all careful about that; but I want to inquire from Scripture what God has established, and the verses I read in 2 Corinthians carry the answer: "Now he which *stablisheth* us with you in Christ, and hath *anointed* us, is God; who hath also *sealed* us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" (2 Cor. i. 21, 22). You have there the principle of establishment and endowment. The apostle reminds the Corinthians that God had something here that He had established. It had nothing to do with the world, or with this scene, where men have their interests and occupations. It is what God has called His Church—"The church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood (or, with the blood of his own)" (Acts xx. 28).

Do you know what the world did with God's Son? It did not know Him; spat in His face; crowned Him with thorns; nailed Him to a tree, and slew

Him; and there is the end of the Son of God as far as the world's present attitude towards Him is concerned. You say, That is giving the world a very serious character. Yes, and there is an immense breach between God and the world to-day, because of its treatment of His blessed Son. And that is why the apostle says: "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory; which *none of the princes of this world* knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. ii. 7, 8). If they had known who the Lord of glory was, they would not have crucified Him; but they have done it, and there is a breach between the world and God; consequently, the moment the world's hand appears in matters relating to God's Assembly, I do not say it is a sad day for the world, but it is a sad day for the Assembly, for it shows that it has fallen under the influence and power of the world.

When the world cast out God's Son, a new structure came in view; it was God's Assembly, which He had bought with the blood of His own. It was something very precious to God; it had cost Him the life-blood of His own dear Son. That blessed Son had come Himself to redeem and bring that Church out of the world to God, as the apostle puts it in another epistle: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world" (Gal. i. 4). God looked to have something here in this world, that was peculiarly His own, and separate from the world. And why was it left in the world? To let the world know what the character of God was, whose Son it had cast out. The Church is

to be morally the continuation of Christ, characteristically. "For to me to live is Christ" (Phil. i. 21), said Paul. The life of Jesus is to be repeated in the lives of His people (see 2 Cor. iv. 10, 11). The world is to learn the nature of God through His Assembly. If this is to be, He will need to establish it—not the world.

This is exactly what 2 Corinthians i. 21 presents. First of all you have the *establishing*, and what is that for? I do not doubt it is for power. The moment the saints have the sense of being stablished in Christ by God, and of thus being sustained by God, there is power, since all is by the Holy Ghost, to walk in this scene for God.

Further, He has "*anointed*" us. What will that give us? Divine intelligence. Intelligence is always connected with the anointing. "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing *teacheth you of all things*, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it *hath taught you*, ye shall abide in him" (1 John ii. 27), *i.e.*, they were intelligent. Where does this intelligence come from? Not from the human mind, which can contribute nothing in divine things, but from the Spirit of God, that has anointed every believer. And then we further read: "Who hath also *sealed* us, and given *the earnest of the Spirit* in our hearts" (2 Cor. i. 22). There you get two other thoughts—the seal and the earnest. Everybody knows the meaning of a seal—it gives the thought of security, and it is a mark of identification, while the earnest of the Spirit is connected with the enjoyment of all that is ours even now. The individual sealed with the Spirit, and having the earnest of the Spirit,

is secure and joyful. We are then established, anointed, sealed, and have the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts; hence power, intelligence, security, and enjoyment mark God's Assembly. It really wants nothing else. Show me the assembly that has all this in their souls, and they will want nothing else—they could not be contributed to, for blessing, by anything which has its spring in man's mind. Nay, the more man is in evidence the less will there be of God.

We read a good deal in Scripture of individuals and of the Church being *established.* To see this we will go back to Paul's history, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. Before his conversion he had been bitterly opposed to the Assembly of God, and had wrought terrible havoc in it. He was at the bottom of the slaying of Stephen, consented to and witnessed his death, and then went on his mad career to Damascus, to wipe the name of Jesus off the earth. He was the terror of the Assembly. But God did then what He loves to do now—He stepped in, and converted the foremost opponent, and the "chosen vessel," an apostle of Satanic hate one moment, became an apostle of Christ the next. A wonderful transformation was that, very like the figure given us in Jeremiah xviii. 2-6, where the potter wrought the shapeless clay. First the vessel was in the mind of the potter, then he wrought on the wheel and formed the vessel, and then the mind of the potter was in the vessel. From eternity there had been a purpose in the mind of God regarding Saul, and now He picks him up and converts him—his will is broken, and from that moment he becomes a most blessed servant of Christ. Before, the vessel was in the mind of the great Potter; and now the mind, and thought, and

purpose of God are in that "chosen vessel," and he carried them to the Assembly.

After Saul's conversion we read: "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judæa and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified" (Acts ix. 31). Why rest? Because Paul was converted, and his conversion marked an epoch. It only shows what that man's power was. Before his conversion ceaseless persecution afflicted the saints. Then, converted by God and brought into the Assembly, the Church had rest. How much may result from one conversion!

The work of God goes on, and here and there individual companies spring up; all of one kind, of one stamp, each an integral part of the one Assembly, which the Holy Ghost had formed on the day of Pentecost; but they need establishing, and Paul goes round confirming the disciples (see Acts xiv. 22, xv. 41). In Acts xvi. he goes out again, after the great congress at Jerusalem, because he had the sense of the liberty of Christ, and he was very desirous of teaching the disciples to walk in that liberty. Judaising teachers were dogging his steps, and saying to the Gentile converts, "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved" (Acts xv. 1). Hence the congress at Jerusalem, from which came a letter containing instructions as to what the Assembly should do; and Paul and Barnabas were the messengers, accompanied by Judas and Silas. "And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. And so were the churches *established* in the faith, and increased in number daily" (Acts xvi. 4, 5). There we get the first thought of *establishment* in relation to the Church,

and what is it? Worldly support? Far be the thought! It is the ministry of the Holy Ghost through this beloved apostle and his fellow-workers. It is the ministry of the truth that makes people free—takes them out from under law, puts them in liberty, and the sense of "the true grace of God wherein ye stand" (1 Pet. v. 12). The Greek word for "establish" means "to make stable, or strong"—that is real establishment. It is divine support, and divine ministry, though coming through human lips.

Now I will take two other verses where the word comes in. "For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be *established*" (Rom. i. 11). What is establishment there? Spiritual gift—which leads to divine ministry of the Word—nothing else. You may depend upon it, in any measure in which the world touches the Church of God, it is not established, but dis-established—the faith of God's people in Himself, as the alone source of good, is undermined, for they are thereby taught to rest upon an arm of flesh, and not upon the Lord. Truly said the prophet: "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited" (Jer. xvii. 5, 6). The heath in the desert is the driest thing out; and you must of necessity get a fruitless, sapless condition of spiritual life, usually called "Moderatism," in every Assembly where the things of God are allowed to be mixed up with, supported by, or are in any way tampered with by the world, that is at enmity with God.

Now turn to the very first epistle penned by Paul—that to the Thessalonians. These dear young saints a little while ago were heathen. They were converted through the apostle's ministry. There was a great deal of opposition in Thessalonica, so that Paul had to leave it, of which we read in Acts xvii., as also of his going to Berea. Of his hearers there we are told: "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (ver. 11). I want you to be Bereans—men that search the Scriptures. What I say, or any other man says, is of no value—it has no weight or authority—unless it be supported by Scripture. You go to God, and God's Word, the Scriptures, and get your light—as I seek to get mine—alone from Scripture, the only source of light on divine things, whether the Church or aught else. And if I am wrong—put me right. I want the truth, because truth is above everything.

To these young Thessalonian believers, undergoing much persecution, the apostle wrote: "Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; and sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellow-labourer in the gospel of Christ, to *establish* you, and to comfort you concerning your faith" (1 Thess. iii. 1, 2). What is it that really establishes people? The ministry of the truth. Timothy was a very remarkable young man, though perhaps a little timid, hence the apostle says, "Let no man despise thy youth" (1 Tim. iv. 12). Some were inclined to snub him, and throw cold water on him—a thing not unknown in the twentieth century on the part of venerable seniors

towards their younger brethren—a practice not to be commended, however. Do you know what the apostle says regarding Timothy? "I have no man like-minded who will naturally care for your state" (Phil. ii. 20). He was a very devoted young man, though he needed possibly a little exhortation and encouragement, which Paul gave to him, in the two epistles addressed to him. The Assembly of God to-day would be all the better of a legion of Timothys, for the Thessalonians were much established by the visit alluded to (see 1 Thess. iii. 6-8).

Establishment, then, is by the ministry of divine truth, that builds the soul up in the knowledge of Christ. To this the apostle Peter agrees as he says, "The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, *stablish*, strengthen, settle you" (1 Pet. v. 10). And again: "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be *established* in the present truth" (2 Pet. i. 5, 6, 7, 12). I recommend you strongly to belong to the establishment—to be an established Christian in the sense in which Scripture uses the word.

But now you will say to me, That does not touch the question of what people call "establishment," or "the Established Church," *i.e.*, a national, religious institution, which the worldly civil power supports, and helps to maintain. I know it; but I want you

first to see what the relation of the world is to the Church, and then you will be able to judge, if what we see around us, under the guise of a "national Church" has its pattern in Scripture or not. There the world and the Church are at opposite poles. Turn to the Lord's prayer in John xvii., for we must go to Scripture to get the truth on this point. There our blessed Lord and Master, the night before His death, is crying to His Father for His people. He says, in the course of that prayer, "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me *out* of the world" (ver. 6); and then adds, "I pray for them: I pray *not for the world*, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine" (ver. 9). Had He no interest in the world? The deepest interest—He died for it; but He did not then want the world as a sphere for the display of His power and rule as Son of Man—which will come all in due time. It is the very reverse of a prayer He will yet pray in response to God's decree: "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession" (Ps. ii. 8). The Son of God is told there to ask, and God will give Him the heathen, the nations, for His inheritance. Has He prayed that prayer? No, because if He had He would have got them.

What then has He done? He has passed through the world, been rejected by it, died out of it, that He might glorify God about sin; He has annulled the power of death, broken up the grave, and brought to naught the power of Satan. He has ascended on high, sent down the Holy Ghost, the Church has been formed, and that Assembly is His witness during His absence. He says to His Father, I do not pray for

the world yet—the day has not yet come when I want the world. In the meantime I pray for My people. He will get the world yet, and the kingdoms of the world, as we read in Revelation xi., where there is immense delight in heaven, when the last angel sounds: "And there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever" (ver. 15). The moment has then arrived for the rejected King to get His rights; then He will pray the prayer of Psalm ii., and it will be answered without delay.

But the prayer of the second Psalm has not yet been presented to God. For whom then does the Lord pray? His own who are *in*, but not *of* the world. "I pray for *them:* I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them thy word; and *the world hath hated them*, because they are *not of the world*, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. *They are not of the world*, even as I am not of the world" (John xvii.

9-16). It is a wonderful place the Christian holds in this world—let us take it to heart—loved by Christ and hated by the world. A wonderful position of privilege and responsibility attaches to every child of God to-day to be here as the representative of God morally. In resurrection the Lord said to His own, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (John xx. 21), to manifest grace, love, holiness, and what God is in active goodness—that is the mission of the saint of God, the Church of God, in this world. As holy priests we are to offer up "spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. ii. 5), and as royal priests we are to "show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (ver. 9).

Could we then expect the world to support this blessed divine institution, which our Lord calls "My assembly," purchased with His own blood, and which we have seen is the House of God and the Body of Christ? Should we expect any support, any countenance from the world for that? Clearly not! All the Church ever got by dabbling with, or truckling to the world was a lessening of its spiritual power and an increasing diminution of its light and real testimony for God. We see all round about us to-day what was prophetically delineated by the Spirit of God, who foresaw that the world would creep into the Church and be its downfall. We get a most distinct unfolding of this defection and the expressed mind of Christ in relation to it all in Revelation ii. and iii. The Lord there sends seven letters to the seven Assemblies in Asia, commencing with Ephesus, the most favoured of all as to privilege, for its history began with Paul's ministry, and it received his letter

somewhat later. I have no doubt in these seven addresses we have a panoramic view of a prophetic nature, showing that which the Church of God—seen in responsibility down here as the vessel of testimony—would be, during the absence of the Lord. They were seven local Assemblies, and were told that if they did not answer to the mind of the Lord they would be removed; and they have been—there is scarce a trace of real Christianity in any of those places to-day. The candlestick has been removed. But there is more than this, if we look at them, as we ought to, as prophetically unfolding the main features of the Church's history, as seen in its responsibility, from its first defection of heart for Christ, to the final removal of the vessel of testimony by spueing out of His mouth.

In Ephesus it was the declining of first love—the Church could get on without Christ's personal company, and though busy in His things they could do without Him; they had let other things come in. They got sleepy, dull, and occupied with the things of the world, and ceased to be according to the mind of Christ. This took place, historically, in the first and second centuries of the Christian era.

Then in Smyrna you have great persecution, and that epoch was seen in the second and third centuries, when the most fearful persecutions took place. The Lord said, "Ye shall have tribulation ten days" (Rev. ii. 10), and it has been noticed that there were ten distinct times of persecution. But the devil found out that persecution was just the way to wake up God's people. First of all Satan will try and seduce you; and if he cannot do that, he will seek to crush you—these were always his tactics. The flames of per-

secution, however, brought out more and more what was in the saints that had been wrought by God. They were all the brighter for it, so Satan altered his opposition again, with better success.

When we come to Pergamos, where do we find the Church of God has taken up her abode? The complaint of the Lord is, "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's throne is" (Rev. ii. 13). They had not given up the confession of His name nor denied His faith, even in those days—looking back to the times of persecution in Smyrna—when Antipas (meaning "against everybody") was the characteristic attitude of faithfulness to Christ, involving martyrdom in many. I would like to be an Antipas, if every one else is giving up the truth, as was then the case as regards keeping separate from the world. Get hold of the Lord, and if everybody is against you, put your back against the rock and stand. Some one once said to Luther, "All the world is against you." His reply was, "God and I are a match for them." Many an Antipas lost his life, but their names are enshrined in the Lord's memorial of them—"My faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth" (ver. 13).

This epoch, which Pergamos describes, corresponds with the fourth century, when the Roman Empire became nominally Christian. The Emperor Constantine embraced Christianity outwardly, though we are told he deferred his baptism to his deathbed. Instead of trying to crush out Christianity, pagan Rome—now become Christian in profession—said, We will shield Christians, we will take care of them, we will take them under our wing; and that was the utter defeat of God's professing Church. They

were taken under the wing of the world, protected, and upheld by the world, and the profession of Christianity forced on heathen races at the point of the sword. This really was the Church going into captivity. Her being *thus established* among the nations led to what is now by men called the "Established Church." I do not wonder at one of your greatest and most pious men in Scotland—when he saw the nominal Church of the land about to assemble, accompanied by martial bands and mounted soldiery—saying of it then, "There goes the Church in chains." He saw that which was nominally the Church supported by all the world could furnish. God always tells us what is coming, so what Dr Chalmers saw, Scripture prepares us for.

In Thyatira things go from bad to worse. In Pergamos the Church courted the world. In Thyatira the Church ruled the world. It perfectly describes the dark ages, which ran fully a thousand years, when Rome as the ecclesiastical mistress of the nations of Europe, could excommunicate monarchs, and go the length of compelling a king to go and kiss the Pope's toe. You say, That is ancient history. Yes, but here in Revelation ii. it is all depicted before it came to pass. And that is why the Lord said to Thyatira, "Notwithstanding I have this against thee, that thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess; and she teaches and seduces my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols" (Rev. ii. 20). The Church began to teach in these days instead of being content to be taught. Consequently its edicts were promulgated and Scripture set aside—yea, soon forbidden to be read by the laity. We do not get in Scripture that the Church

teaches. She is taught. She has to listen to God, and by His apostles and prophets of the New Testament His mind has been revealed. The Church has only to obey. God teaches by His Word, and *only* by His Word and His Spirit, so that any teaching not in keeping with Scripture is utterly valueless to an obedient child of God. The point is this—that which is the real teaching power in the Church of God to-day is the same as at the beginning, viz., the Holy Ghost acting in energy through the gifts that Christ, as Head of the Church, still furnishes to His Body.

Thyatira runs on to the Lord's return, it must be noticed. "That which ye have already, hold fast till I come" (ver. 25), shows this; and the papacy will continue till then without doubt. That history has a strange way of repeating itself is only too true, and Jezebel is going ahead with leaps and bounds in this present day in the British Isles. This will continue till the rapture of the saints—the removal to heaven of God's Assembly—and then "Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth" (see Rev. xvii. 4, 5, *et seq.*)—the Apostate Church—will be destroyed by the ten horns and the beast, who will hate the whore and burn her with fire. What *she taught* was mingling with the world socially, and going on with the world religiously. Hence in Christendom everywhere you have Established Churches, with State patronage and pay, and the reigning monarch the head of the nation and of the Church at one moment, by reason of his exalted position nationally, irrespective of any question of his knowledge of Christ, of being born of the Spirit and sealed by the Spirit—which is the very essence of Christianity—and the whole idea of the Headship

of Christ is lost. Of course this kind of an Established Church suits man in the flesh, *i.e.*, the world generally. In fact it is what is called "the Christian world." What an idea! Does it not make you shudder? The world murdered Jesus; how can it be Christian, not knowing Christ? Let us open our eyes to Scripture, and what God's Word gives us.

I see the world to be a system where man wants to get on and be happy without God; and if you bring in the light and truth of God's Word to men of the world, they will soon let you know what they think of you. The world is the world—let us beware of it. Our Lord truly said: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also" (John xv. 18-20). Bearing His words in mind, what shall we do? We cannot get out of the world, but we can walk through it as witnesses for Christ. We are interested in every man in it, and I should like to drag every man out of it and bring him to know Christ as his Saviour, Lord and Head.

Now as to endowment. You will find there is such a thing as Christian endowment in the New Testament, and that the Church of God is splendidly endowed. You get the endowment in Romans xii. 6-8; 1 Corinthians xii.; and Ephesians iv. 7-13. It is all that the Holy Ghost can bring into the Church, nothing else. Any other endowment will eventually

only do harm. In Romans xii. all flows from God; in Ephesians iv. Christ in glory is the source of the gifts; while in 1 Corinthians xii., for practical use and profit in the Assembly everything is by the Spirit. "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal" (ver. 7). Some think this means everybody, and that all men, Jew, Turk, infidel, or heathen—have the Spirit. The only man who, according to the teaching of Scripture, has the Spirit of God to-day, is the one who has been born of the Spirit, been led to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, been washed in the blood of Christ, and subsequently sealed by the Spirit. That is true of every believer to-day—he is sealed for security and enjoyment, and whatever gift God may in His grace give him is for the benefit of all the rest. "For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit" (ver. 8). All the spiritual gifts taken together are the endowment—the divine endowment—of God's Assembly.

I used to have great difficulty about 1 Corinthians xiii.—as to why its portrayal of love came in there, between chapter xii., which describes the various gifts given to the Assembly, and chapter xiv., which shows the sphere of their exercise, *i.e.*, the Assembly in function—like Parliament in session—where Paul makes it very plain that "*profit*" is to be the keynote of what takes place in God's Assembly. I could not understand why the apostle broke off his subject of gifts and began to speak of love in chapter xiii. I think I see it now. The reason is this—in chapter xii. we have some of the variety of gifts with which the Holy Ghost endows the Assembly of God. In chapter xiv. we see that Assembly in function,

and the keynote of that chapter is, What will build up? What will *profit?* What profited was to obtain—what did not was allowed no place. No matter what gift you may have, it is of no possible value in the Assembly unless you have come right through the atmosphere of chapter xiii. You have to be permeated—you and your gift—in love, or it is no good at all. Whatever you may have, if it be not exercised in love—the spirit of chapter xiii.—it is really valueless. Love thinks of everybody but itself, and seeks their profit. That is a fine chapter to spend your spare moments in; you will come out a very different kind of man after doing so, for you will be so like Christ.

There, then, is the endowment of the Assembly of God; and now let us go back to Acts xx., because the servant of the Lord who brought out the truth of Church Endowment illustrated it in his own history, and in so doing he brings out points of great importance. Paul had wrought at Ephesus for over two years (Acts xix. 8-10), many had been blessed, and while there, in the exercise of apostolic authority, he had doubtless appointed elders over the newly formed Assembly. Some time after this, being at Miletus, he sent for them to come to him. He gave them a lovely review of his ministry in Asia, and followed it by the solemn charge: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the assembly of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood [or, blood of His own]. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse

things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts xx. 28-30).

Now we have often heard of apostolic succession, and men to-day might deceive you or me about it, so it is well to notice what Scripture says. Paul says, I shall have successors, but they will be "grievous wolves." The Lord speaks about them also: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Matt. vii. 15). We have to use our spiritual eyes, and see, and possibly we must ask, Is that man a man of God? or, Is he a wolf in sheep's clothing? The Lord speaks of false prophets, as those who come in and exercise their influence over men, and we are all apt to be influenced. The Lord tells us what they were, and Paul also indicates them. There were no apostolic successors—though there were those who falsely took that place. The Lord in writing to the Ephesians by the pen of John says, "Thou hast tried them which *say* they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars" (Rev. ii. 2). The apostles were the foundation of the Assembly (see Eph. ii. 20). The foundation of a house once laid is not repeated. Hence we should not expect to find apostolic successors. To any man who takes up that ground I should say, Scripture does indicate you, but it is not by a name to be desired. The man that takes up that ground, and assumes to be an apostolic successor must of necessity find himself classed among "grievous wolves" and "liars." Those are epithets that no sober man would desire to be labelled with, yet, notwithstanding this, so-called "apostolic successors" are to be found in Christendom to-day. With this clear light of Scripture on the subject we may dismiss the

figment of "apostolic succession." Deliverance from it will help many a child of God into the truth, however, for while Christ gave no more apostles nor any apostolic successors, in His tender love He has continued to give all the gifts needed for the upbuilding of His Church. He never hinted at—as is to be expected—and was careful not to introduce that which we have seen introduced by man, with very sad results, as witnessed in Rome and "her children" (see Rev. ii. 23).

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers [or "bishops"—as it is everywhere else rendered], to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts xx. 28-30) was good advice to those Ephesian elders, and to all who seek to minister in divine things. True ministry always detaches souls from the minister, and attaches them to Christ; and if ministry does not do that, then it is bad, pernicious. Holy-Ghost ministry always leads the hearer to have to do with Christ personally, and to value the written Word of God. How fully did Paul feel this as he said, "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among *all them which are sanctified*" (ver. 32). There again is the endowment in result—believers are built up, enriched, and brought into touch with *all* the saints, *i.e.*, those separated to God. Where must the saint of God find

his resources and supplies in this or any day? In God, and His Word.

Hold on to that Word. Let no "higher critic" with his axe of infidel origin lop from your Bible the portion which his "scientific criticism"—outcome only of his own blindness to the necessity of its place in the arch of inspired revelation—would have you expunge. Mark the man that would rob you of a line of it. You may say, He is a clever, learned, up-to-date, good man. I care not; if he touch my Father's Word he is a robber in disguise, a wolf in sheep's clothing. I believe that book to be inspired from cover to cover, but I know that in the so-called Church to-day the men who are undermining faith in that book are the very men who should be its conservators. They pose as its expositors, and are paid to be its upholders, but too many, alas! are mere "Scripture-destroyers" so far as their teaching evinces. I would say lovingly to you—Beware of these robbers; heed them not. If we were to listen to the bold and bald infidelity of these latter-day critics of God's holy Word, they would rob us of most of its books, leaving but few pages for faith to feed on. In fact, little but the covers would be left. I would exhort you to do what I purpose doing. What is that? I will make them a present of the covers, and keep the book intact.

The apostle next says: "I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me" (vers. 33, 34). Why does that come in? The apostle knew what a part money was going to play in Christendom. And you know to-day how much people are thinking about Church-money, and what a commotion there is in this

hand over it. Do you find money much connected with God's things in Scripture? I do not, at least in a commendatory way. It has a large place in Christendom. Very large. Did you ever face this question—What would be the result if money and music were taken clean out of Christendom? Take out money. Would not many pulpits be affected? Take out music, and many pews would be emptied. And that is the Church, is it? Little wonder that the Church is to-day the laughing-stock of the world, as they note the keen contest for goods and gear, money and manses.

But you say, The servants of the Lord must be supported. Certainly. Look at this dear man of God, and see how he was supported. To every one who would have given to him, he could say, I do not *want* your support. To the Philippians he wrote when they had sent him help: "Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account" (Phil. iv. 17). At that time he was a prisoner, but before then he supported himself by making tents, and I guarantee they were the best tents in the market (Acts xviii. 3). He would not give any man a chance of saying, Paul was paid for it; or, I have made Paul rich. He kept himself; and I think the man that earns his bread by some honest trade, and then gives himself to the work of the Lord, is the happiest and the freest man, because he is perfectly independent of any man but his Master. Paul would not take a penny from the Corinthians (see 1 Cor. ix. 15, 18; 2 Cor. xi. 7-9), though he laid down the rule that the servant should be supported. He laid it down for others and flung it up for himself. He laboured and supported himself, ministered the truth,

but kept the things of God far apart from "filthy lucre" as he himself terms it (Titus i. 7).

Money is spoken of in Scripture, but rarely with commendation, for "the love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Tim. vi. 10). This statement is easily corrected if not true. Let us trace the history of money in connection with Christ and His things. It began with Judas, who grudged his Master the value of the box of ointment that Mary of Bethany broke over His blessed body. He could have made "three hundred pence" out of it, and kept for himself what would not have been missed from the bag he bare (John xii. 5, 6). Foiled then, he directly afterwards sold his Master for "thirty pieces of silver" (Matt. xxvi. 14-16). Next we hear of the "hush money" which the chief priests and elders of Israel paid the Roman soldiers to deceive the world and deny the Lord's resurrection. "They gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, his disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day" (Matt. xxviii. 12-15).

The end of Acts iv. shows Barnabas doing well with his money as he lays it "at the apostles' feet" (vers. 36, 37). This act then led some others in the Assembly to desire to have a better character for devotedness than they deserved. Ananias and Sapphira sought to deceive the apostles about the price of their land. They were convicted of having "lied to the Holy Ghost," and the hand of God fell upon them in judgment, and they died.

Then in Acts vi. "there arose a murmuring of the

Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration" (ver. 1). In Acts viii. Simon the sorcerer offered money to the apostles to buy the Holy Ghost, which revealed his true state, for Peter says to him: "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God" (vers. 20, 21).

The twice repeated allusion to Balaam should make every man chary of trafficking in divine things coupled with money, lest he in any degree might seem to be of those "which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness" (2 Pet. ii. 15).

The apostle Jude's allusion to such is no less solemn, "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core" (ver. 11). Three characters of evil which would be apparent in Christendom, becoming apostate, are thus portrayed.

"The way of Cain" is mere natural religion characterised by the opposition of the flesh to God's testimony and God's real people. "The error of Balaam" is an ecclesiastical evil, teaching error for reward. "The gainsaying of Core" is open opposition to God's Authority in his true King and Priest, our Lord Jesus Christ. From how many pulpits today is the very divinity of the blessed Lord denied, and the atonement He effected scouted, as being quite unnecessary, for man is not *fallen* and needing redemption, but ascending gradually.

In a day when the ministry has become, alas! a mere "bread trade" with many—I do not say all—who take it up, just as a man would enter the army, the navy, or one of the learned professions, to make a living thereby, and are prepared to fling Scripture and scriptural creeds to the winds, to keep in touch with the world's advancing infidelity, Jude's words are indeed weighty and pregnant with deepest warning to all who minister in God's house.

The less money enters into the things of God the better. The endowment of the Assembly of God has no relation to money. Its endowment consists in the Scriptures of truth—God's holy Word—and in the Holy Ghost. The latter dwells in every Christian, and likewise in the Assembly, and is competent to supply all that the Assembly needs in its earthly pathway down here.

If I have trenched in these remarks upon anything that you have held as true and sacred, believe me it is only because I desire that you and I should walk in the light of Scripture, and according to what God has given in His Word. God builds, God establishes, God furnishes, God endows; and His Spirit is as much here to-day to supply all the need of His Assembly as on the day of Pentecost. The Lord give us to heed His Word.

LECTURE V.

The Body of Christ: The United Church.

(Eph. iv. 1-16.)

THE Assembly viewed as the Body of Christ is presented to us under that figure in four New Testament epistles—Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, and Colossians; and I want, with the Lord's help, very briefly to indicate to you the salient points that the Spirit of God presents in these epistles, in so speaking of the Church of God.

Get the thought of the Body first of all in your minds. What is the body? My body is any part of me that is not my head. But of course the body would be of no use without the head, and the head would be of no use without the body. The Church when presented in Scripture as being the Body of Christ is the expression of a wonderful divine unity, and that unity is formed by the Holy Ghost. There is a thought in people's minds that we are *united* to Christ by faith. Such is not the case. Nor are we united to Christ by life—that is not the truth. We are *related* to Christ by faith, but that is not union; and we have the life of Christ, but that is not the thought that is presented in the expression here: "There is one body, and one Spirit" (Eph. iv. 4).

The Holy Ghost is the formative power of the Church of God, and the Holy Ghost is that by which the saints of God on this earth are united to a Man in glory. I said once before, that the Head of the Church was never dead. I repeat it, because I think it will help us to understand what is meant by the Headship of Christ in this way.

He who is now Head of the Church was once dead, but it was after He was risen from the dead, and had passed into glory, that He then took this new place, as Head of that which is called His Body. The Messiah died, the King of the Jews; but never the Head of the Church, because He was never Head of the Church till He was alive from the dead, and ascended. Ascension takes you to the spot where Manhood is now in glory, and we shall see that what the Lord Jesus is as Man before God, He shares with all those whom, in His grace, He is pleased to call His brethren. What He was as God ever remains the same—He did not cease to be God because He became Man. He took human nature in conjunction with the divine nature in His own Person when He came to earth. But He needed to become man in order that any of us should be united to Him. More than that: He had to die, as, in words so deeply expressive of what was in His heart he says, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John xii. 24). Now that He is risen and glorified, we are united to Him by the Holy Ghost given to dwell within us. We could not have been united to Him if He had abode in His Godhead glory. It is as Man ascended up far above all heavens that He has become "Head over all things to his body the church."

In John xx. He could say to Mary, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (John xx. 17). He, the true "corn of wheat," unique in Himself, and always alone till He had died, is now able, as alive from the dead, to associate His own with Himself on resurrection ground. The Sanctifier and the sanctified are all of one before God. But this is not union yet. In Acts i. 5, we read that not many days thence, they were to be baptized with the Holy Ghost; and thus we know from 1 Corinthians xii. 12 the Body of Christ was formed.

There is a notion abroad in Christendom that because Christ became incarnate He took fallen humanity into union with Himself, and thus elevated manhood. That would be Christ becoming one with us in our fallen condition. No, that He was alone, as become Man, it cannot be too earnestly pressed. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John xii. 24). What is the rich harvest of fruit that sprang from that precious seed of corn falling into the ground in death? All who are Christ's from Pentecost till He comes. If you are a Christian you are part of it. He is risen, and now the truth is, not that Christ has become united to us, but that we by the Holy Ghost become united to Him. An old man once said to me, "Is it not glorious that He has become 'bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh'?" I said to him: "That is a very wrong thought. It lowers Christ to our level. The truth is that He raises us to His level, and when risen from the dead makes us 'bone of His bone, and flesh of His flesh.'"

The one is false, unsound doctrine, that suits man in the flesh, because it is supposed to take up every man. The other is the truth of God, and applies only to those whom Christ can call His brethren, those who are born of the Spirit, washed from their sins in the Saviour's blood, and sealed by the Spirit, so that they can truly say, "Abba, Father."

Let us now turn to the first epistle which speaks of the Body. "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another" (Rom. xii. 4, 5). You have Assembly truth alluded to here, but it is not unfolded. Here is the first teaching in the New Testament as to the Body of Christ, and the youngest believer can take in its meaning. "As we have many members in one body" alludes to our arms, fingers, and feet, &c. —the many members in the human body, which is the figure Paul is going to use. "All members have not the same office." There is a great lesson in that. Each has its own function. "So we, being many, are one body in Christ." Who are the "we"? All Christians. You must not think of it as a society, a club, a mere organisation, as men would say. Take the thought of the members of the human body, and then ask who compose the one body? "Many," in fact all Christians on earth to-day are of it, and compose the Body of Christ in its time aspect. What body do you belong to? In Scripture we only read of the one Body of Christ. All Christians are of it. "And every one members one of another"—I think that means, I cannot get on without you, and you cannot get on without me. Therefore what you see all around you to-day—the universally consented-to distinctions,

differences, and dissensions among the people of God who are split up into numberless so-called "bodies"—is only the work of the enemy, and you will find that what had produced these things is not that saints rally round the truth, but round some little difference. The uniting bond is some doctrine, or creed, or ordinance—it is not the glorious, wonderful truth of the unity of the Body of Christ, formed by the Holy Ghost here upon earth, and Christ, the risen ascended Man, the Head thereof in glory.

The "many" are one body in Christ, and surely if one be a member of that body that is quite enough. You say, But there are many "bodies" in Christendom to-day. True, but they are all going to be left behind by-and-by when the Lord comes for His own. They will all get their grave by-and-by, and be forgotten for ever. And what about the Body of Christ? It will be for ever with its Head in heavenly glory, its eternal destiny—everything else is to be left behind; and therefore I could not belong to any of these "bodies." They are not scriptural—they are not lasting enough, not good enough for one who enters into what the Body of Christ is. "We, being many, are one body in Christ," lets me know the body to which I and all Holy-Ghost-sealed saints belong. Every believing child of God to-day on the face of the earth is a member of that which He calls the Body of Christ. Every other membership, therefore, is superfluous, not to say false to the membership God has formed.

Now turn to 1 Corinthians x.: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (ver. 16). That is the cup for which we give thanks at the Lord's

Supper; and the cup comes first because we can only get right with God on the ground of redemption by blood, and that is why the Spirit here emphasises the fact of death by putting the cup before the loaf.

What is the meaning of the breaking of bread? Do you break bread just to be refreshed in spirit? I have no doubt you will be that, through the infinite grace of the Lord, but that is not the primary thought. It is the expression of the fellowship of the Body of Christ; it is the way in which the Body of Christ expresses its fellowship here upon earth; and of course that does not embrace the unconverted. If he wants to be there, what would you do? I should try to make him feel he had no right there. Not being a member of the Body of Christ—not knowing Christ as his own personal Saviour—his true place is outside. If kept outside, he might learn his true state as unsaved, instead of being deceived by being given a position that does not belong to him; and, when awakened to that solemn discovery, he would want to get into the reality of what alone could meet that state, viz., finding Christ as a Saviour. It is not that I have no interest in men's souls—I have lived and laboured to win them for Christ for more than forty years—but God's Word makes it abundantly plain that no unconverted man has any right to be at the Lord's Table. How dreadful to thoughtlessly take in your hands the bread and wine that speak of a Saviour of whom you are utterly ignorant, and of a communion of His death in which you have no part. If you are a child of God, and a member of Christ, it is God's will you should be there, unless there be some grave disqualification in your life and ways that puts you, in discipline, outside, and there may be such. If not, it

is the privilege, the portion, and the responsibility of every member of Christ to be there, expressing the communion of the Body of Christ.

Why? "For *we*, being *many*, are one loaf, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one loaf (as it really is)" (ver. 17). What does our partaking of the loaf express? The unity of the Body of Christ of which each and every saint is a member—it is the company that has been formed by the Holy Ghost, of which we own that we are part, in partaking of the one loaf. But in chapter xi. you pass from the thought of the Body of Christ mystically to the human body of the blessed Lord, given for us in death. Thus you meet His wish, so touchingly expressed to His own the night He was betrayed. "And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me" (Luke xxii. 19). That is to say, God combines in the Lord's Supper two thoughts—first, the Lord's death is shown forth, and next, that which has been the result of that death, viz., the Holy Ghost coming down and the Church being formed here—one body—as it is of one loaf we partake. You eat in fellowship with all the saints of God, as you take that which is the memorial of Christ going into death for you, in necessary separation from and judgment in yourself of all that had to be met by that death in the judgment of God.

We must not confound the Lord's Supper with John vi. There we read: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life" (vers. 53, 54). There

we have the substance—of which the Supper is the shadow. It is really knowing Christ as the One who has died, and then in faith, and in the affection of your heart, you turn back to the cross where Jesus suffered. You can say, I shall never be there, because He was there. I eat the bread, and go back, in memory, in heart and affection, to the spot where He was once, but where He never will be again; and when you break the bread it is the memorial of a Christ that does not exist—there is no such Christ now. He liveth now and is alive for evermore, if He were dead. The broken bread and the cup tell us of Christ in that condition in which He once was, and never will be again—they tell us of a dead Christ: we know and love, and delight in a living Christ. The oneness of the Body is truly expressed in the breaking of bread—if the truth thereof be fully apprehended by our souls.

Now turn to chapter xii. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. xii. 12, 13). Note the language Paul uses here. He is talking of the Church, the Assembly of the saints of God down here, and when he has brought in his figure of the human body having many members, and yet forming but one body, he says, "So also is *Christ*"—I should have said, "So also is the *Church*"—no one else would dare to write what Paul wrote—"So also is Christ." There is a Man in glory, and He has sent down the Holy Ghost, and gathered out of this world for God,

and redeemed by His blood, a company of sinners, saved by grace; He has put them together by the Spirit, and they belong to Him; they are thus united to Him, as being His body, and He is the Head of that body; He is one with them, and they with Him; hence He said to Saul, "Why persecutest thou me?" In persecuting His people Saul was persecuting Christ. He says, You are touching Me — My people and Myself are one.

I can understand now why he says, "So also is Christ." What a wonderful thing the Church is. You say, The Church is only composed of men. Wrong. It is composed of men, but what of the Holy Ghost? You say, Is not Christ the Head, and are not men the Body? It has for its head Christ, and its unity is formed by the Holy Ghost, who is in each member; you must not forget that. You say, Oh, I did not think of that wonderful bond. There would be no Church but for the Holy Ghost. He indwells you, if a believer, and me also, and unites us to that ascended One in glory; and that same Spirit binds you and me together—"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body" (ver. 13). What could be simpler? What puts a believer into the Body of Christ? The baptism of the Holy Ghost. That does not mean that there is a new baptism every day. Before the Holy Ghost came down, the Lord said to His own, as we have seen: "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence" (Acts i. 5). The Holy Ghost came, this baptism took place on the day of Pentecost, and the Body of Christ was formed. For the moment it consisted of Jewish believers only; then in Acts x. the Gentiles were brought in, not by Paul, but in the wisdom of God, through Peter. This was

beautifully confirmed by what took place later in Jerusalem (see Acts xv.), when the question was raised as to whether the Gentiles, who were not under law, should be put under law. It was decided at and promulgated from Jerusalem, that since they had received the Spirit, they were set free from everything that the Jew was under as such. The Body of Christ was to walk in subjection to its Head.

Why does the apostle elsewhere say, "Give none offence, neither to the Jews nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God"? (1 Cor. x. 32). The Church of God is a totally new structure, that has been brought into the scene, as formed out of both Jew and Gentile. It began at Pentecost, as we have seen, and since that day countless souls have been baptized into the One Body. You do not hear of a new baptism or a second baptism of the Spirit in Scripture, though people often speak in this fashion unintelligently, as though it were repeated. It is not. When people have got out of the seventh of Romans, and are free and happy before God, they speak of a second baptism. Most probably they are just tasting the first. The man in Romans vii. is full of himself, and therefore wretched; but a man who is in the liberty of the Spirit of God is very happy, for "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Cor. iii. 17).

The baptism of the Holy Ghost took place once, and once only, so far as I read of it in Scripture. How then do believers now receive it? may fairly be asked. I will reply by seeking to illustrate. I take you down to a park where there is a lake. It is a beautiful summer day, and there is not a ripple on the water. In that water for fifty yards all round the margin of the lake there are scattered rushes springing up,

which approach nearly to the centre of the lake. I take up a pebble, fling it, and it drops into the centre of the lake. There is a little commotion—a circle forms on the surface; that circle spreads and widens out, and soon the nearest rushes get taken in. It widens further, and by-and-by the movement reaches to the very edge of the pond, and every rush is in. Now, as each soul is saved, by faith in Jesus, and is then sealed by the Spirit, it is embraced in the baptism of the Spirit, as the rushes were embraced in the ever-widening circle. This will go on till the latest and last member of Christ is brought into the Church, and then it will be caught up. There is no new baptism, but each believer, in his or her turn, gets into the circle. No illustration is perfect, but that is the best I know. The Spirit of God has come, and thus "by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles . . . and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." Before the cross the Jew was bid to hold aloof from the Gentile, but now they are united, for they are brought into one body by the reception of the Holy Ghost, and are to walk in happy fellowship, since they have been made to drink into one Spirit.

In John xvii. the Lord prayed to the Father, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (ver. 21). Did the world ever believe that the Father sent the Son? I think at the beginning, when they were all "of one heart and of one soul" (Acts iv. 32), and were walking in the joy and love of Christ, the testimony to the world was so powerful that they were compelled to bow to the truth in multitudes, and this

might have gone on so as to embrace the world, if the saints had been faithful. Those who did so were real and genuine. Easy-going lip-profession was not in vogue then, and, as I have before remarked, in Acts v. people were not in such a hurry to "join the Church", as they are to-day. Would you join the Church if you thought God would cut you off by death for telling a lie? That is what it was then—unholiness in His House He would not stand, and Ananias and Sapphira died; but for the moment there was a beautiful testimony, and a lovely answer to the Lord's prayer—they had one object, they were delighting in Christ, seeking to serve Him, walking in love, and blessed, holy fellowship, and there was a oneness and unity that were not simulated. It was the oneness of love and of the Spirit that filled their bosom and controlled their life; but to our shame be it told, that did not last, and this testimony to the world broke down.

It is a great thing for every Christian to get into his soul the sense that there is "one body," and one only, and that—whether hitherto aware of it or not—he is a member thereof. Why did Paul say to the Corinthians, "Now *ye* are the body of Christ, and members in particular" (1 Cor. xii. 27)? Just to teach them and us this truth, and preserve us from accepting membership of anything that is not the local expression of this wonderful Body. You may perhaps have asked yourselves, What is meant by "The Body of Christ—its Local, Time, and Eternal Aspects"? which was the subject I announced for this afternoon's address. Here is the answer in part. This is the *local* aspect of the Body of Christ. Paul writes to the Corinthians, to all God's people in Corinth, "*Ye* are

the body of Christ." They were not all the Christians in the world at that moment. No, but the local Assembly at Corinth was the expression of the greater truth. As my body is under the direction, the control, and will of my head, so was it to be in that day. The Assembly at Corinth being united to Christ in glory, and drawing all its supplies from Him, was to walk according to the figure used here, and so with the aggregate of the saints in every other place then and to-day also. The human body is sometimes afflicted with a disease called chorea, where the muscles are all in motion, and they will not keep quiet although the head desires they should. I think the Church of God has got that kind of disease to-day. The members are all doing their own will. It ought not to be so with the Body of Christ, but, alas, so it is.

It is really very important to see that when the Assembly of God is spoken of in any locality, it is viewed as being "the body of Christ" in that locality, and is responsible to walk as such. It is because this is not seen that Christians consent to the confusion now existing on every hand. If you admit membership of any one of the many ecclesiastical bodies on earth, it must necessarily shut you out from the others, hence I want that we should learn from God's Word the all-importance and divine sufficiency of simply recognising the membership which, in the case of every believer, now exists as to the Body of Christ. If you have not got hold of the truth as to the Body of Christ, and that you are a member thereof, you will allow yourself in many things that the Word of God does not warrant.

Not long ago I was speaking to three Christian

young men. One said he was a member of the Established body; the second, of the Free Church; and the third, of the United Presbyterian. I said to the first, "Now, who is the Head of your body?" "Oh, Christ," he replied; and the other two likewise claimed Christ as the Head of their respective bodies. "Has Christ then three bodies?" I asked. "Oh no, that would never do," they replied, in chorus. "Then you are each members of a body without a Head, and that is merely a trunk, a corpse." They then turned their queries on me, and asked what body I was a member of. My reply was easy. "I have never been a member of anything but the Body of Christ, and never mean to be. That is the membership which God in His grace accords me, and that surely is enough, and it takes in all that are His."

It is high time we Christians looked at Scripture, and judged ourselves by Scripture, as to this matter, for otherwise we must make a great mistake as to the mind of Christ. Where and what is the Body of Christ, say in Edinburgh, to-day? It is composed of all the saints of God in the town. Are they walking in unity, love, and order, according to the figure of the "one body" to which they all belong? Alas! no. Then what are we to do? I will tell you what I should like to do—I want to walk according to the truth, *i.e.*, according to the principle of the one Body of Christ. I do not suppose I shall get all the saints to act on this truth, but that is the real principle in Scripture, and I want it to have effect upon my life and ways, and I give you credit for the same.

"The body of Christ" then has a local aspect, which ought to be in evidence, while, at the same time, the truth of the whole Assembly on earth being

regarded as the Body also, is clear from what the apostle immediately adds: "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues" (ver. 28), which manifestly refers to the whole. These are chiefly spiritual gifts which were needed for the whole Church at the beginning, not all of which are found now. There are no apostles and prophets now. Why? They have done their work and passed off the scene; they were used administratively and by their teaching to lay the foundation, and on their written ministry we now repose—so we cannot give up a line of Scripture—nor is aught more to be expected. A man having dug out his foundation, lays his foundation stones, and then he goes on building. All that is wanted for God's work, in carrying on the rest of the building, we shall find in Ephesians iv., which chapter presents the body in its *time* aspect.

Let us now pass on to that epistle, and see how the truth comes out. The apostle is there occupied with developing the truth of what the Body of Christ is to the Head. The difference between Ephesians and Colossians is this—in Ephesians you have what the Body of Christ is to the Head; in Colossians you get what the Head is to the Body, even as in Romans and Corinthians you had the relation of the members to one another, in and as united to the Head. The danger of the Colossians was not holding the Head. Our added danger to-day is not seeing what it is to be an Ephesian—a person who knows himself to be in the counsels of God; and is then instructed how to walk according to his vocation, so as to correspond

to what God in eternity predestined, and then in time called him to be.

The epistle opens with a lovely doxology: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (chap. i. 3, 4). There is the elective choice of God. The Church was the thought of God in eternity, before the foundation of the world; but the individual relationships are treated of first before the corporate are unfolded. You will never learn the truth corporately till you have learned it individually. God thinks of the individual believer first. God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. Long before there was a world, upon which the first man sinned, the believer was chosen in Him to be "holy and without blame before him in love." You say, I am not holy. But look—is not He holy, and without blame, and in love before God? Oh yes. Well, I am in Him, that is the point.

Then we read: "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted *in the beloved*" (vers. 5, 6). The eternal thought of God was to take up poor sinners, bring them to Himself, turning foes into friends, and enemies into children. It does not say that He has taken us into favour *in Christ*. Why? It is not warm enough. Nor even *in Jesus*. No—it is "*in the beloved*." Fathom that for me, tell me how much God loves His blessed Son—tell me the depth of the love

of the Father to that blessed Son, of whom He spoke twice when He was on earth as "My *beloved* Son." That love is infinite, and He has taken us into favour "in the beloved." Did not I tell you that the Church was heavenly in being? She belongs to heaven, though she has to live on earth for a while.

Next we are told: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (ver. 7). Who are the wonderful people who are chosen in Him? Are they unfallen angels? No, they are sin-stained sinners, who have been the servants of sin, and the slaves of the devil; them God has picked up and redeemed, and they are going to be the companions of Christ in glory. God's thought regarding Him, as also of Adam, was this, "It is not good that the man should be alone." The Church then is to be Christ's companion in eternal glory. Could any blessing be higher? Impossible, and nothing lower than that will content the heart that has grasped this truth. Sometimes I am asked if I am a "High Churchman." I always say, Yes, and quote Ephesians i.

This first chapter gives us the purpose and counsel of God, and at the end of the chapter the apostle prays, "That ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which

is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (vers. 18-23). Christ is there seen as "head over all things to the church," which defines His position in relation to "all things," *i.e.*, absolute supremacy. In that position His Assembly is His fulness, since it is "his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." It is He who fills all in all, but His Body then forms the complement of the Head. It is He who fills the universe with His glory; but, wondrous thought, He is not then alone, not isolated. The Head without the Body as its complement would be incomplete in glory. It is the Body that completes the Head then, and this gives us the *eternal* aspect of the Body, and the way we, as the heavenly Eve, come into the inheritance of all things that pertain to Christ as the last Adam. What a comfort to our hearts to know that He would not be happy in glory without us. Then will the blessed Lord's prayer be fully answered: "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one. . . . Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (John xvii. 22, 24). We have not yet reached the glory, but we have already tasted what is better than the glory—the love which will bring us there.

The Church then is the complement—the fulness of Christ. What would the Head be without the Body? The organism is not complete, hence Christ must have His Church with Him in glory. I do not doubt that what is brought out here includes the *whole Church.*

This embraces every child of God, from the day of Pentecost right on to the Rapture of the saints. All will be there by-and-by, and then the Assembly will be "the fulness of him that filleth all in all." There I repeat is *the eternal aspect* of the Body.

In Ephesians ii. we have the counsels of God carried out in power, and we see how we are "quickened together with Christ, and raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (vers. 5, 6).

Chapter iii. develops the mystery, giving us Paul's part in the work. "For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" (vers. 1-5). What was the mystery? The revelation of this wonderful new structure that he calls "Christ and the church" (chap. v. 32), viz., that Jew and Gentile should be absolutely one, united by the Holy Ghost to Christ in glory and to one another in a co-equality of privilege, so that they should both belong to Him, and be His Body here upon earth. You cannot find this in Old Testament Scripture.

People have an idea that the Old Testament saints formed part of Christ's Body, the Church. Impossible—because there was no Body till the Head was in glory, and He was not in glory, as a Man, in Old Testament days. The very existence of the Church

as the Body of Christ depends upon the ascension of Christ on high and the coming down of the Holy Ghost. This purpose of God, so long concealed, and therefore called "the mystery," was "now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets," of the New Testament clearly, not Old Testament prophets. You may search the Old Testament from end to end, and you will find nothing about the Church. I know that in your Bible there is a great deal interpolated about it at the tops of certain chapters of Isaiah and the prophets; but that forms no part of God's Word. It was added by translators and commentators, *i.e.*, put in by men who were not intelligent, and people have been misled by it. Those prophets of the Old Testament wrote only of Israel and the Gentiles, who will come to the front by-and-by, and come in for blessing on earth in due time.

But we are speaking of Christ's Assembly, and it was not made known before Paul's ministry, "that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel" (ver. 6). The Gentiles are to be joint-heirs, joint-body, and joint-partakers with the Jew—the word is the same in each case. Jew and Gentile are to be welded into one, only the Jew ceases to be a Jew when he is brought into the Church, and the Gentile likewise ceases to be a Gentile. They are both on new ground, with new life, and new relationships altogether, being united to Christ and to each other in Him. This new structure needed a special vessel to reveal it, hence Paul says, "Whereof *I was made a minister*, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that

I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (vers. 7, 8). By "the unsearchable riches of Christ" I apprehend that he means the mystery of Christ and the Church, and all the wonderful blessings which accrue to those who are now united by the Holy Ghost to the One in glory, in whom all those riches are treasured, who is Head of His Body here upon earth.

Paul was selected by the Lord "to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid (not in Scripture but) in God" (ver. 9). Though you may get many a shadow, type, or figure—which you can now apprehend as seen through New Testament spectacles—the truth of the mystery was never revealed in the Old Testament.

And now we get God's present object in the existence of the Assembly. It has its being "to the intent that *now* unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God" (ver. 10). What is the idea presented in this wonderful mystery? In chapter i. our blessings are in heavenly places; in chapter ii. we are seated in Christ there. In chapter iii. the created intelligences in heavenly places who never saw God till they saw that lowly Babe in Bethlehem, and then saw the world get rid of Him, see now a company of people having the life of Christ, the Holy Ghost uniting them all together—out of the most opposed conditions of nationality and the like—and then through them the life of Jesus manifested here upon earth. They have a very interesting lesson-book. It is the Church; but I am afraid they are getting a very distorted view of divine things in these days, unless, as

doubtless they can, they distinguish God's work, to carry out His own counsel, from our failure of realisation of it.

How wonderful is the grace that can take up men and women, mould and shape them, put Christ into them and bring Christ out in them, and then make them the exhibitors of that blessed Man whom the world would not have. It makes Christianity a very serious thing.

Passing now to chapter iv., Paul says, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love" (chap. iv. 1, 2). If we get these graces in our souls, what the Lord enjoins on us is very easily carried out, viz., "Endeavouring to keep *the unity of the Spirit* in the bond of peace" (ver. 3). This unity of the Spirit is not similarity of sentiment, but the oneness of the members of the Body of Christ which the Holy Ghost formed, and which we have to seek to maintain in the power of the Spirit. How contrary to this would it be to allow things the Word of God does not warrant, the effect of which is to divide me from my fellow-members. There is one Body, and only one, and you and I, dear fellow-Christian, are members of and belong to it. Then if we would be faithful to this truth, we must certainly disown membership of every other, though that is far from all that is included in the exhortation. Anything that is not framed and formed according to the pattern and doctrine of the unity of the Body, is not of God, and it is not glorifying the Lord, or for his own real blessing for a saint to go on with it.

Notice now the three circles the apostle presents: "There is one body, and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling" (ver. 4). That shows us the circle of divine reality. That one Body and Spirit embrace every Christian, every child of God upon earth at this moment, even as the hope is one, of which the Spirit is the source and power.

Further, there is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (ver. 5). That is the circle of public profession and acknowledgment of Christ as Lord. That is wide enough, and large enough. Many are baptized, but are their sins forgiven? If not, they are merely in the circle of profession, and that is a sad condition to be in.

Finally, we read that there is "one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (ver. 6). Three wondrous bonds of unity are here presented—the Spirit of God, the Lordship of Christ, and the omnipresence of God the Father. The apprehension of those mighty truths would form all believers into one.

The care of the Head for the Body is then developed in relation to the gifts which Christ bestows for the blessing and help of His own. "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men" (vers. 7, 8). After He went up on high, we are shown the way in which the Body is nurtured and cared for. When Christ came into the world Satan ruled everywhere, drove his chariot through the world, and had every man chained to its wheels. Then Christ went into death, bore the judgment of God, overcame Satan, annulled his power,

and now that He is risen from the dead, it is no longer man the vassal of Satan, but Man the blessed Victor over Satan. Jesus overcame him morally in the wilderness, and absolutely in death; and now He has picked up the very people that used to be the slaves of Satan, has put gifts into them, and sent them out to do the same blessed work He did Himself, *i.e.*, deliver men who have been under the power of Satan. He overcame Satan Himself, and now He fills these vessels with His Spirit according to His grace, and the sovereignty of His choice, and deposits in them spiritual gifts that enable them to preach the Word, and men are delivered, and brought to God.

"(Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things)" (vers. 9, 10). I look up, and I see a blessed Man at God's right hand, and He is going to fill all things. The whole scene will yet be filled with the glory of Christ, and that is why Scripture speaks of the day of Christ. You read of the day of the Lord—that is when all will be *subject* to Him. The day of Christ is when all will take colour and *character* from Christ. But before and till that day He is the source and spring of all true ministry to His Church. Hence we read: "And he gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some, evangelists; and some pastors and teachers" (ver. 11).

These are the gifts necessary for the gathering together of those who are to be the companions of His glory, since they are the members of His Body. Apostles and prophets we have already considered; the others we will just glance at. The evangelist loves souls and brings them to Christ, and it is a blessed

thing to go out with the gospel. An evangelist, however, should be like a pair of compasses—one leg fixed, and the other as long and wide-reaching as you like; but he is always centripetal—he brings the soul to the door of the Assembly, and says to his brethren, You had better see if he is genuine.

The pastor is occupied with the sheep—the saints in all their need; the teacher with the book—the Scriptures. They are put together. They are usually joined in the same person. These then are the gifts that Christ gives. There are no apostles now, nor prophets either, save as they exist for us in their writings; but the others He still continues to give while His Church is in this scene. Everything that is now needed for the growth and the upbuilding of the Body is still furnished. But they are for the *whole* Church—not *a* Church—there is no such thought as that in Scripture. This is quite plain from the next verse of our chapter, which says these gifts are given "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (vers. 12, 13). The saints individually are to be perfected—this then branches out into the work of the ministry and the edifying of *the* (not *a*) Body, by which the perfecting is carried on. There is to be growth and upbuilding in the knowledge and apprehension of the Lord. And the effect is that God's children are not "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (ver. 14). It is most deplorable to note the

way saints are carried about with every wind of doctrine. It would not be the case if they went to Scripture, and to God for light, and believed that the Holy Ghost was here to lead, guide, and teach them all the truth.

The object and effect of divinely given ministry is to so act on the hearts and consciences of the saints that they are not carried into error, "but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ" (ver. 15). Love is ever active, and if you are in the enjoyment of God's love, you will speak the truth in love. But all blessing is derived from "the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh *increase of the body* unto the edifying of itself in love" (ver. 16). Everybody has his or her part in God's Assembly, the ministration of each member in its place tending to the edifying of the body in love. Perhaps you are nobody where you are, as a member of some unscriptural "body." You get a sense of what it is to be a member of the Body of Christ, and you will find you have your niche, your part. Perhaps you will say, My part is a very small one. Never mind. Do the thing the Lord gives you; it might be only to give a cup of cold water—that would be a very useful thing to a thirsty soul; and the result is increase now and reward by-and-by.

In Colossians the great point is that Christ "is the head of the body, the church" (chap. i. 18), and the saints are urgently exhorted to hold the Head, derive from the Head, and draw from the Head. Forgetting to do that, rationalism and ritualism would be sure to

affect them (chap. ii.). That chapter puts man out absolutely; man is set aside and (chap. iii.) love reigns, while the peace of Christ rules in the heart "to the which ye were *called in one body*" (ver. 15). This is what love effects—the love of Christ: "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church" (Eph. v. 29). Nourishing is food, and cherishing is warmth —that is what babes want. Warm the saints with the love of Christ, and feed them with the truth of God, and they will grow. If "we are members of his body," I cannot get on without you, dear fellow-Christian, and you cannot get on without me. We are one in Christ. God help us to understand something of the blessed truth of the oneness of the Body of Christ. It is indeed a UNITED CHURCH in Scripture, and will be so seen in glory shortly.

LECTURE VI.

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S TEMPLE: THE FREE CHURCH.

(JOHN viii. 31, 32, 36; 2 COR. iii. 5, 6, 17; 1 COR. iii. 16, xii.-xiv.)

IF there be one thing more than another that marks Christianity, it is that which is brought before us in the words of our Lord in the eighth chapter of John's Gospel, and in the writings of the Spirit of God in 2 Corinthians iii.—namely, that the saint of God to-day is called to freedom, divine freedom, divine liberty; and that is why I say that I believe the Assembly of God is a free Church. There is not the smallest touch of bondage about it, viewed according to Scripture. If you are not yet in the liberty of the Spirit of God, individually and collectively, I hope you soon may be, because, according to Scripture, if you are not free in your soul before God—if you are not standing fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free (Gal. v. 1), you are not breathing Christian atmosphere.

How simple are the Lord's words to the Jews, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you *free*" (John viii. 32). First of all, the soul, individually, by the reception of the truth revealed in Christ, is set in perfect freedom before God. Freedom from what? Everything that would hinder your

heart and soul thoroughly enjoying God. "The servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever" (John viii. 35). The servant is in bondage; the Son is in liberty. There is the contrast; and who is the Son? The blessed Lord Himself; and what does He do? The moment He takes you into association with Himself, of course on the ground of death and resurrection, you are in the same atmosphere as He is, and therefore when He says, "the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you *free*, ye shall be *free indeed*" (ver. 36), He indicates the abiding liberty into which His grace brings us, that we may enjoy the rich portion He shares with us. I like to admit, honestly and openly, that I am a Free Churchman. You say, The Free Church of Scotland? No, nor of any other land; the Free Church of God—of Scripture. I am also a thoroughly Established Churchman; and greatly rejoice further to be a member of the United Church. The Established-United-Free Church is the Church of Scripture, and membership of anything but that is foreign to its teaching. God's Assembly is *established*, *united*, and *free*, and I should be ashamed to own that I was a member of aught else. All Christians are united to Christ and to each other, are in the liberty of sonship before God individually, and are brought by God into the most wonderful liberty collectively, His saints, all together, forming the temple of God. Now see how other scriptures present it.

In Romans vi. the apostle says of believers in Christ, "Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (ver. 18). There is yet sin in the believer, but he is set free from its domination.

He has learned what it is to have died with Christ, and to be alive in Him, in all the freedom of resurrection. This liberty, however, is never known till I have the sense that I am dead with Christ, and also am risen with Him. What is true of Christ, the believer is to apprehend by faith for himself, and take account of as true of himself.

"For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God" (ver. 10). What is that? He has nothing but God before Him. Now for the sequence: "*Likewise reckon* ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus" (ver. 11). Is not that liberty? If you do not understand that, I hope you soon will.

Romans vii. tells us of one who is what many are to-day—full of himself. He speaks of himself forty times, and at length he says, "O wretched man that I am." He could not be anything else, because he is full of himself. How did he get liberty? "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (ver. 25). "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are *in* Christ Jesus: for the law of the Spirit of life *in* Christ Jesus hath made me *free* from the law of sin and death" (chap. viii. 1, 2). There is our new place before God in Christ. Who is that true of? Every one who through faith in Christ and the Spirit's power can enter into it. There is no use pretending to be free if you are not. But thank God, it is the portion of the feeblest believer. I have had the happy and exhilarating sense of what it is to be connected with Christ, the other side of death, for four and forty years. He is my life, and in Him I have sweetest liberty.

Now go to Galatians, and see how this truth is

presented there. I find the apostle saying, "Stand fast therefore in the *liberty* wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (chap. v. 1). What is that? Getting under law. Nine-tenths of God's people to-day are under law as to their standing before God, and in their soul's relation to Him, hence they are in bondage. Paul urges us not to be entrapped by the yoke of bondage, because law occupies me with myself, and a man that is occupied with himself is bound to be wretched, because there is nothing in him that can answer to God's claims. You must learn that you are "dead to law by the body of Christ" (Rom. vii. 4), and alive unto God, before you can get liberty. A Christian is entitled to know this, hence the apostle says, "*Stand fast* therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Gal. v. 1). Liberty—freedom, is what belongs to a Christian; not liberty for the flesh, but emancipation from it, and from all that which kept the soul in bondage, darkness, and distance, so that we might be in the enjoyment of God, even as Christ is.

What a trumpet note of the Spirit to our souls we next hear: "For, brethren, ye have been *called unto liberty*; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another" (Gal. v. 13). The apostle is so angry with the legalist teachers—the men that put the Christian under law, and consequently into bondage—that he adds, "I would they were even cut off which trouble you" (ver. 12). Paul knew that love effects what law fails to produce, just as the gospel takes you much further than the law. The law says, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy-

self." The gospel teaches us to "lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John iii. 16). For this the believer in Christ has power, by the Holy Ghost; for the gospel gives you life, power, and an object, life in Christ, power by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, and then Christ personally as the object for the heart. The law did not give you any of these; the gospel gives you them all. Well may Paul say, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free"—*i.e.*, hold firmly the very elements of the Christian calling—and then adds—"only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another" (Gal. v. 13).

Now look at 2 Corinthians iii., where Paul says, "Our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the new covenant; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (ver. 6). If you were under the new covenant in the letter, you would get into bondage again, therefore he says, God "hath made us *able* ministers of the new covenant; *not* of *the letter*, but of *the spirit*." What is the new covenant? The terms of relationship with Himself into which God will enter by-and-by with the house of Israel and the house of Judah according to Jeremiah xxxi. 33, 34: "But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their

iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Israel will then be fitted for the enjoyment of the reign of Christ; they will have the forgiveness of sins, and the Holy Ghost be in them, but their blessing does not include the sense of sonship and union with Christ. We have all that they will have, and much more; but we are in the enjoyment of the blessings of the new covenant, through the ministry of it, without being under it. We must always remember that all Israel's blessing by-and-by is on earth, whereas we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ.

We get the spirit of that covenant which is grace. Then we are told, "Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (ver. 17). That is the characteristic feature of Christianity —liberty, as there was none under the law, to behold the unveiled glory of God in the face of Christ; and the effect of it is to transform us into the same image, for "we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (ver. 18). You get occupied with Christ, as He is revealed in glory. And as you are occupied with Him you become transformed—you become more and more like the One with whom you are occupied. What occupies a person will give colour to his character; and if you are occupied with Christ, in the enjoyment of what He is, and where He is, you will take your colour from Him, and come back into this world, either individually, or as the Assembly to be here for Christ, and to express Christ in the scene where He is not.

Now if it be true that "where the Spirit of the

Lord is, there is liberty," we may well ask, Where is the Spirit of the Lord? He dwells in His temple. Turn to 1 Corinthians vi.—which is the only place in the New Testament where we have the term, "temple of the Holy Ghost." The apostle in writing to the saints at Corinth about practical life and holy walk, says, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (ver. 19). That is the body of the individual Christian—yours and mine. Every Christian has received the Holy Ghost; a divine Person has come to dwell in his body—which is the blessing promised by the Lord in the gospel. "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you (collectively), and shall be in you" (individually) (John xiv. 16, 17).

And now this precious truth is applied practically to each individual, as Paul inquires: "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20). That blessed truth regarding the individual should lead each believer to be holy in the practical details of daily life, because, wherever we go, we take the Holy Ghost with us. If we go into bad associations, morally or spiritually bad, we take the Spirit with us. Do you think He will manifest Christ to us under these circumstances? No, He will be like the scarlet pimpernel that opens during the day and closes at

night. He shuts up, so to speak, ceases to minister Christ to your soul, and you do not feel very happy, because you have grieved Him, and in faithfulness to you, He grieves you. The apostle says, Do not forget "ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body." That is the individual side of the Spirit's temple, and now to see the collective we will go back to chapter iii. 16.

Addressing the Corinthian Assembly, Paul says, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" The temple is the House of God in its most sacred aspect—the Assembly. God dwells in it by the Spirit—for "ye are the temple of God": hence the terrible sin of defiling it. What is your thought of a temple? No *man's* house is a temple: God's house is, as occupied by God, and God's Spirit making Him known. We must get hold of the double thought—it is the temple *of God*, and the Spirit of God *dwells* there. It is where His presence may be known, and where His blessed Spirit dwells for that very purpose.

There is a remarkable verse in the Old Testament that connects itself in my mind with this—"In his temple doth every one speak of his glory," or, as the margin translates it, "Every whit of it uttereth his glory" (Ps. xxix. 9). What is the meaning of that? There is not a thing in His temple, says the Psalmist, that will not utter His glory. You say, If *we* are that temple then we are here for that object. There is a great truth in that—I commend that verse to you. Study it, pray over it, ponder it; and you will find out that if you have learned what it is to be of God's temple, there is something very grave about it, as every whit of it is to utter His glory. How could that glory be

uttered unless His presence be known and enjoyed? The thought is very beautiful—He is in His temple just to make His presence known to His people, that their hearts should turn back to Him in worship, delight, and praise. Our Lord says in Psalm xxii., "I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee" (ver. 22). There, in the Assembly, the blessed Lord, the risen Man, declares the Father's name, and becomes the Leader of the praises of His people.

You will say, that is Psalm xxii., but it might not have the peculiar application I have given it. Go, then, to Hebrews ii., and read what is there said regarding His singing in the Assembly. "For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren (ver. 11). Who is he that sanctifieth? Christ; and "they who are sanctified"?—all Christ's, every one that belongs to Him—they "are all of one"—of one stock, one set, one place before God as set forth in the risen Man. It is the place that Christ's brethren—the Assembly—have before God; hence it says, "For which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren."

I hope you would not call the Lord Jesus your Brother, not even "Elder Brother." Thomas will teach you better, as you hear him speak on the second Lord's Day, when Jesus was among His disciples. He was not present the first Lord's Day, and he missed a fine meeting. It is a great mistake to miss a meeting with God's people. The next Lord's Day Thomas was present, and the Lord spoke to him. Mark his response: "My Lord and my God" (John xx. 28). There is a reverence due to that exalted Being,

the Lord Jesus Christ, that we must maintain, and that we must ever preserve in our own souls. Of His saints it says, "He is not ashamed to call them brethren"—sometimes we fear He might be, as we think of our life and ways. He is looking at the Assembly, however, as that which He has redeemed by His atoning sufferings and blood-shedding; He has presented it to God, and "he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee." Wonderful, indeed, is it to hear Him sing praise. How does He do it? Do you not understand? Then you have missed the great point of Christianity if you have not got this. To be, here on earth, in His Assembly, where you have His presence, hear His voice, and are conscious of His leadership, as He is leading the praise, is wonderfully blessed—every whit of that temple is to be vocal with God's glory, and the risen Man leads it.

You say, I thought we should get that by-and-by, when we get to heaven. Yes, but we are also to have it down here. How are we to get it, you say? Well, that is the question; the Spirit of God alone can lead us into it. Now look at the temple, and see how the Spirit of God works in the Assembly. The temple is connected with worship, and where can I get worship? Only in the midst of God's people, who form that temple. I meet a crowd to-day in the street hurrying along. I know some of them and I say, Where are you going? "Oh, to church." What for? "Dr So-and-So is going to preach." And do you call that worship? Oh no, that is not worship, that is ministry, quite right in its place, but ministry is not worship. There is tremendous confusion in the minds

of Christians about these matters. You may say, "What are you doing this afternoon? You are speaking on God's Word." True, but I am only exercising any little gift God has given me for the good of His people, or those not yet converted if such be here—but this is not a worship meeting, nor is it the Assembly. The Assembly, *in function*, consists only of the Lord's people, born of His Spirit, and indwelt of His Spirit, gathered together in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, confessing the blessed truth that there is one Body, and when so gathered, subject to the guidance and control of His Spirit. The chief object of the Assembly when so gathered is the Lord's Supper—the shewing of His death, which leads to praise and worship of the highest kind.

What is the difference between ministry and worship? Worship goes up to God, and ministry comes down from God. If you come and hear me speak, and get a little help, thank God; but that is ministry, not worship—it comes from God to you, though He may use a human vessel. But worship is what we read of in John iv.: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. . . . Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well (fountain) of water *springing up* into everlasting life" (vers. 10, 13, 14). That is what the Lord says to the poor Samaritan woman. It is to her He also says, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the

Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (vers. 23, 24).

Do you know what the Lord Jesus did and is doing? He came "to *seek* and to *save* that which was *lost*" (Luke xix. 10). He is still ranging the world to find sinners to save them. The Father is *seeking worshippers*, and it is only His children that can be such. You cannot get worship from the world, it knows Him not. Pharaoh wanted to get the Israelites to put up their altar in Egypt. No, said Moses; and he was quite right. The world is a scene under judgment. We, like Israel, must go three days' journey into the wilderness, so to speak, before we can hold a feast unto the Lord. There must be downright separation from this scene, and that is what Christianity is. You are brought by the death and resurrection of Christ out of this scene, into relationship with Christ, and you find yourself in the company of the risen Man. He is the Leader of the worship of God's Assembly, and none but God's people are there.

What about the world? It is outside. What are you going to do with them? Leave them alone while we worship; they cannot worship. Worship is the overflow of a full heart—the outflow of a heart that enjoys God; but the man of the world does not know Him. I would leave them alone very severely so far as worship is concerned, for they know nothing about it. But on the other hand, when not engaged in the worship of God with our fellow-saints, we should seek to be in season, and out of season, carrying the blessed gospel of God to them. Then when they have believed and received

the gospel and also the Holy Ghost to dwell within them, we should like to see them in the bosom of God's Assembly, and will heartily say, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou without?" (Gen. xxiv. 31). But as long, my hearer, as you are unconverted, you are really outside, you have no place in God's Assembly, for of you it is as true as of Simon, you have "neither part nor lot in this matter." That is drawing a very hard and fast line, you say. I did not draw it, I did not write the Scriptures. You see how God writes, and what He says. People have such strange notions in their heads about "the Church." They must all "join the Church"—whether converted and saved is often a question not raised—and they go in troops, and God's people are thus swamped and spiritually hindered, if not actually buried in Christendom's systems, which avowedly admit believers and unbelievers to similar privileges—such as the Lord's Supper. True spiritual worship under those circumstances is an impossibility.

Now let us look at 1 Corinthians xii. and its connection with chapters xiii. and xiv. You will remember that Paul wrote to Timothy, "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. i. 7). The spirit of power is seen in 1 Corinthians xii.—the Holy Spirit; the spirit of love is found in chapter xiii.—the spirit of Christ; and the spirit of a sound mind is what marks chapter xiv. Study these three chapters, and you will find it to be so. The persons who possess the gifts of the twelfth chapter must be imbued with the spirit of the thirteenth, or they will be of no use in the fourteenth, where you have the Assembly in

function. What do you mean by that, you ask? Well, the British Parliament exists, though it is not sitting to-day while I speak. All the members are away in the country; but presently they will return, assemble at Westminster, and that will be Parliament in function. That really is chapter xiv., and there we learn how God's Assembly is to be conducted. Chapter xii. shows us all that the Spirit is to the Assembly. The gifts are manifestations of the energy of the Spirit committed to men, and we read that "there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are diversities of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all" (vers. 4-6). This is not exactly an exposition of the Trinity, but you have the Spirit, the Lord Jesus, and God, all in relation to the Assembly—the Assembly here on earth—acting in and through the gifts.

"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal" (ver. 7). Whatever the Holy Ghost has given to any individual member of the Assembly is not for himself, it is for all the rest, for the profit of everybody else. "To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, *dividing to every man severally as he will*" (vers. 8-11). It is the sovereign will of the Holy Ghost that distributes these various gifts in power, for the good and blessing of

the Assembly. Where He works, it is God who works, but the Spirit is thus presented personally acting on earth as *He wills*, and His operations in men are gifts distributed according to His will.

That is the way God started the Assembly down here, and the variety presented is most interesting. Spiritual power was very diversified, and the most striking feature of this chapter is the fact that all these various and most useful manifestations were not placed in one man, but by the same Spirit divided to every man severally as He willed, the complete antithesis to the usual ministry of Christendom's churches.

I pity the minister of the present moment, for he is supposed to have every possible gift vested in him. He must preach and exhort, teach the believers, convert the unbelievers, dispense the sacraments, visit the sick, bury the dead, be pastor, teacher, and evangelist all in one, and finally lead the congregation in worship—a goodly charge indeed. Christendom demands this, and gets plenty to take upon themselves this responsibility. In fact, generally speaking, people are not happy unless they can find a man to their mind who will take charge of the whole concern. But that is not what Scripture teaches; and whether the plan—which is not Divine—really leads to true Divine worship, whether it works out well, and leads to spiritual life and progress, the saints being well fed, while sinners are manifestly saved, you must judge. But I think it is rather like King David's new cart that carried God's Ark in the wrong way. He got into trouble over that, and was the cause of a man's death. Then David halted, read his Bible for three months, and got a lot of light. Of that more anon.

Now God has given us His way for His Assembly, and it is very simple; it is by one Spirit dividing to every man severally as He will. Do you not think there is all that God knows is necessary for His Assembly in it to-day? Yes, it is there, but much is not in use, many gifted men are, practically speaking, buried in the systems I have alluded to, and are consequently not in the exercise of the gift they have received.

The order and importance of the various gifts we may now glance at. "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues" (ver. 28). Gifts were to be estimated according to the measure in which they served to really edify the Assembly. Some were more excellent than others, and should be earnestly coveted. Why are tongues put last? The Corinthians were proud of them, and put them first—they thought if a man could stand up and talk in a foreign language, it was wonderful. They possessed these sign-gifts, and used them like children with a new toy—showed them off—and the Assembly was being turned into a kind of Babel, because they were using these gifts quite out of place. The sign-gifts were to testify to people outside. "Tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not; but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe" (chap. xiv. 22). The possessor of a spiritual gift was a man honoured of God, for he ministered to God's people, and this explains the exhortation—"but covet earnestly the *best* gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way" (chap. xii. 31). I wish I saw the saints, young and old, more covetous of that which would help them to

minister the things of the Lord to the people of the Lord.

Chapter xiii. opens with a statement that *all preachers* should remember. Here is God's word to us. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal" (ver. 1). Love is what God is, and if I have it not, I am not born of God so as to partake of His nature. God's love is its own motive, and, in us, participation in the Divine nature is the alone source of love, which will sustain us in all difficulties. Let us never forget that love is God's nature, and we are to represent Him on earth. You say, I have no gift. Possibly so, but you can love. That every Christian can do, and it is more valuable than the brightest gift, because love is the nature of God, and seeks the blessing of others—it thinks of everybody but itself. What is said of love in chapter xiii. is really the reproduction of the divine nature. It is the life of Jesus, and love abides for ever.

In chapter xii. we have had the gifts, and in chapter xiii. we have love unfolded to us, the spirit in which they must be exercised if they are going to be useful in chapter xiv. Long ago I used to wonder why chapter xiii. came in there. I understand now, there is no use in any gift unless it is exercised in the spirit of love—love that seeks the profit of others. In chapter xiv. you have the Assembly receiving God's instructions, as to what was to obtain in its midst when in function, *i.e.*, when gathered together, so that God might have what He desires out of His people so assembled. First we are told to "follow after love, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy. For he that speaketh in an unknown

tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries. But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort" (vers. 1, 2, 3). Are there any prophets now? Not in the sense of those who bring out the mind of God for the first time, who were connected with the apostles at the foundation (Eph. ii. 20). But there are yet men who are prophets in the sense of verse 3, whom the Spirit can use to speak after this manner, for edification, exhortation, and comfort—men whose ministry brings you into the presence of God, builds you up, stirs you up, and binds you up. Such ministry is invaluable; it is the richest gift. There are many who are anxious to be built up, and if you get good out of ministry, and feel you have been built up in the truth of Christ, that is edification. Then there is exhortation. I like a prophetic brother who stirs me up. He touches my conscience, and brings me into God's presence, as to my practical ways. His ministry is very valuable to God's people. Then there is the comfort, the binding up. There are, in God's Assembly, such prophets to-day, though they may not all be exercising their gifts—that is another thing.

Now observe that the thought of what will *profit* the Assembly is always before the apostle's mind in this chapter. Edification is to be the ruling principle. "I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive *edifying*" (ver. 5). The keynote of God's Assembly is what will profit, what will help. If ministry is profitable, all right;

if not, it is not to be allowed, it is condemned by the Spirit of God. The Assembly will soon know what profits it; and if my ministry is not profitable, the kindest thing my brethren can do is to tell me so. It is waste of time for any of us to go on with that which does not profit. You might not be able to say much, but if God's Spirit gives you anything to say to His Assembly, say it, you have that liberty in God's free Church, and the "five words" might help greatly (see ver. 19).

But an unknown tongue could profit no one, and accordingly we read, "Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret. For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful" (vers. 13, 14). I must know what to pray about, and pray so that others may understand me, *i.e.*, in a language they understand, and audibly to boot. I said to a brother once, "I never say Amen to your prayers." He said, "Do you not? Why not?" "Because I never hear what you say," I replied. He was a mumbler. There should be no such in public. The point is what is profitable. If a man prays till you are fairly worn out by it, that is not for profit. The essence of a good prayer-meeting is simplicity, audibility, and brevity. Long prayers in public are only spoken of in Scripture with condemnation. Prayer in your own closet, with shut doors, may be as long as you like, and our Lord said will be rewarded (see Matt. vi. 6).

In the Assembly the Spirit should control every motion. "What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also" (ver. 15). God's Assembly is

marked by prayer—the expression of dependence—and singing, which is the outlet of the heart's joy. Some people think it is not spiritual to sing—I do not think they have the Spirit's mind. Paul says, "*I will sing with the spirit*, and I will sing with the understanding also. Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?" (ver. 16) Here is worship; blessing and giving of thanks. What a lovely picture of the Assembly in function. It is marked by ministry that profits, and prayer, singing, and worship. That is what God's Assembly is put together for, to turn to Him in prayer, song, and worship. It is the New Testament analogue of Psalm xxix. 9—"Every whit of it uttereth thy glory."

Worship is a most important function of God's Assembly. But what is worship? It is not thanksgiving—it is more. Thanksgiving is gratitude and blessing for what God has given; but worship is the delight of the heart in what He is. It is the soul finding its delight in God—its rest in the revelation of Himself, in Christ. It is not merely gratitude for blessings conferred, for what you have got, though that be not forgotten, but your soul is delighting in Himself, and that is what God looks for. One saint expresses it for all the rest, and the Assembly says Amen. In what takes place in the Assembly God likes warmth and fervency, and if a brother prays to, or worships God, one likes to hear a hearty Amen. There will be a worship meeting by-and-by, in which the Assembly will take part, and hear an Amen that will reverberate through creation. "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and

under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four living creatures said, Amen" (Rev. v. 13, 14). There is a deep diapason note in that Amen. Sometimes brothers pray and lead in worship, yet there is not a sound at the end. I believe if the heart is right there will go out an Amen, a so be it. You are putting your seal upon that which the Spirit of God elicits, and God looks for that.

But now as to ministry in the Assembly. We get very distinct instructions as to what is, and what is not to obtain. Paul felt the importance of only acting in a way that ensured profit to others. "I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all; yet *in the church* I had rather speak *five words* with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue. Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but *in understanding be men*" (vers. 18-20). We ought to understand and obey the Assembly instructions which, in His wisdom and love, our God has here given us, for this chapter is very important, as you will see. "In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that they will not hear me, saith the Lord. Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe" (vers. 21, 22).

Sign-gifts were only for the beginning, but pro-

phecy always goes on, and here we have the final and fullest directions for the conduct of God's Assembly when coming together. "If therefore *the whole church* be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?" Mark those words—"the whole Assembly." Here was God's Assembly in one place. You may say, you cannot get that now. If I could not get the whole I would seek to be one of those that would act on the truth that should bind the whole, if they were subject to God's Word. All were supposed to be there, and gathered in this way. If all spoke with tongues the unlearned would be disgusted. "But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced *of all*, he is judged *of all*. And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you, of a truth" (vers. 24, 25). Detected and exposed by the prophetic ministry, the man's heart is reached, He worships God. He has proved that God had a temple at Corinth, and met God in His temple there. If we all walked in the truth of this, and were so gathered to-day, a worldly man coming in would find such power that he would say, "There were a lot of Christians there, but God was there too."

But the Assembly at Corinth, though they thus gathered, were uninstructed, hence Paul asks, "How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, *every one* of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. *Let all things be done unto edifying*" (ver. 26). They were all too active at Corinth; but that was the way the

Assembly met, with freedom and liberty for *every one* to take part. How to take part *with profit* is taught here. And now we get plain instructions. "If *any* man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course (*i.e.*, separately); and let one interpret" (ver. 27). How simple. "If any man speak," that is open enough, free enough surely. Is that the way things are conducted in the church to which you go? You say, We do not allow that. Why not? Here is God's word for His Assembly. Here are His instructions for you and me, for this epistle is written to us, as much as to the Corinthians; and God says "if *any* man speak." It is to be only two or three, not more, and not all together.

"But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God" (ver. 28). If what he has got to say cannot be made understandable to others, it is of no use—it is excluded. "Let the prophets speak *two* or *three*, and *let the others judge*" (ver. 29). Not to permit this when the Assembly is gathered together is to quench the Spirit. That is as clear as daylight from another scripture, where the apostle says, "Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. v. 20, 21). To despise or hinder the freedom of the prophets is to quench the Spirit. Solemn reflection. I could not, and would not, recognise anything as the Assembly of God where this liberty of the Spirit of God to use any member of the Assembly He *willed* was not maintained inviolate; nor should you; to do so is going clean in the teeth of God's Word. We are not supposed to swallow, but we are told to judge what

every one says, and I do not expect you to lightly swallow what I say, but God's injunction as to the liberty for two or three to speak we must each of us heed, if we are to please Him and keep a good conscience. Whoever speaks must do so as "the oracles of God" (1 Pet. iv. 11). That is his responsibility, ours is to "*prove* all things, and hold fast that which is good." We are bound to judge of what is spoken, not critically, but so as to know what is right, and not to sanction what is wrong.

And then we are told—"If anything be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace" (ver. 30). A prophet might be speaking, and another sitting by get a relevation; if he get up, the first must hold his peace. If the Spirit of God in energy raises a second, the first must sit down. You say, There would be all sorts of confusion in the Assembly if this were allowed. I beg your pardon, the confusion is when it is not allowed, for God is disobeyed. He has said, "For ye may *all* prophesy *one* by *one*, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints" (vers. 31, 32, 33).

These instructions, I repeat, were not merely for Corinth but for every Assembly in every place (see 1 Cor. i. 2). These directions are binding upon you and me to-day; and all I say is, if you are sanctioning what is in the teeth of this, you are assuming a very grave responsibility in your pathway as a child of God. The existing arrangements in the Churches of Christendom are distinctly in opposition to what we are told here. Supposing the apostle Paul came into this city this morning, and found himself at the service

of one of these Churches, could he get up to speak? You say, That could not be; it is all arranged beforehand. Yes; and that is where the departure from God's Word is so apparent, and the results so sad. The existing arrangements of man absolutely do what Paul told the Thessalonian Assembly not to do: "Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings." To despise the latter—refusing them—is to *quench* the former. The world "*resists*" the Holy Ghost (Acts vii. 51), the individual may "*grieve*" Him (Eph. iv. 30), but the Assembly, as such, can "*quench*" Him by refusal to heed what He may say through a prophet of His own selection. That is easily and now universally done by pre-arranging all, and putting all into the hands of one or two, who shall preside over the Assembly, to the exclusion of the Spirit's free action by any member thereof that He may *will* to use for the profit of all the rest. Those who sanction and accept this clerical position incur a fearful responsibility regarding the rights of the Holy Ghost, which the youngest saint can see are thus ruthlessly infringed and disregarded. The greatest sin of Christendom is the way the Holy Ghost has been treated in what calls itself the Church.

You know where you are to-day—are you walking on the lines laid down in 1 Corinthians xiv.? You say, No. Well, you will have to ponder this scripture, and one thing that should awaken your inquiry in the matter is the injunction, "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law" (ver. 34). What use was it to bid women be quiet in the Assembly, if all the men might not speak? You know that in

the Churches everywhere to-day women *and* men too are kept silent. Everything is, as I have previously said, supposed to be wrapped up in the person of one man or two—*everybody else is to be quiet.* God says, "Ye may *all* prophesy, one by one." The only restriction was upon the women—"Let your women keep silence." Christendom says, Ye may *not* speak, save the one we have authorised to speak. And you call that the Church! It is man's, not God's Assembly.

The apostle saw that the Corinthians then—as well as many to-day—would not like these instructions, so then he says, "What? came the word of God *out* from you? or came it unto *you only?*" (ver. 36). That means, Are you to teach me? or am I to teach you? or are these instructions *meant only for you?* Not at all, they are God's plain directions for every Assembly—the whole Assembly of God, world-wide, is bound—when come together—to follow the directions of this chapter, or they will find out by-and-by, in the day of the Lord, that they have made a mistake, as to Church order, all along the line down here, and have built up that which has not God's sanction.

The gravity of these instructions is intensified deeply by the apostle's next word: "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that *the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord*" (ver. 37). We all like to think ourselves spiritual. Now, fellow-Christians, you must face this, every one of you—"the commandments of the Lord" must not be despised. You cannot treat them lightly, and if you have not treated them rightly before, I hope God will give you grace to do so from this time forth. I know some will say,

All that was for early days, and did then, but it is not practicable now. That is sheer unbelief, and audacity to boot. God has spoken, our place is to obey, not to tell Him that we are wiser than He, and know how to arrange matters in His House better than He knew Himself.

In God's House every arrangement must be of God, not of man. We should enter the Assembly with the sense that God will order, arrange, and take care of Christ's glory better than we can by any arrangement of man's suggesting. Everything in the Assembly of God must be left to the action and guidance of the Spirit of God, who dwells in the bosom of that Assembly. By making creeds and confessions to begin with, and then rules and regulations as to the conduct of the Assembly, you are trenching on the domain and liberty of the Holy Ghost. It is a noticeable thing that Christendom's creeds and confessions are marked by the omission of any adequate testimony to the personal presence in the Assembly of the Spirit of God. I do not say that it is denied; but the truth of His personal presence, as dwelling in the House of God, and also in the individual believer, for all that relates to the order of the former, and the comfort of the latter, is conspicuous by its absence. The kernel truth of Christianity is little in evidence.

Again the arrangements for the so-called worship of God are made after a sort that render men independent of the Spirit of God. The Holy Ghost is left out as though He were not here at all. A formula takes the place of the unhindered action of the Spirit in some quarters, and the intervention of men—appointed by man—obtains in others. In all this the

Church has departed from the truth, and not listened to the words of her Lord. It is with deep sadness I say these things, but I dare not shrink from uttering the truth in respect of this, for the blessing and growth in grace of God's dear children so depend on this grave matter. It is in direct ratio as we give the Holy Ghost His right place in our lives individually, and in the Assembly collectively, that we advance spiritually.

But many will say, If you do not have things arranged beforehand there will be sure to be confusion. Leave God out, and there will be. Let Him have His place, and there will be none. I will ask you a simple question. Who orders matters in your house? You or your servants? "Of course I order my own household," is your reply. Good. The Assembly is God's House. Can He not keep order in it better than we? Surely. Let us have faith in the real ever-abiding presence of the Spirit of God. The presence of that Spirit is a real thing, and if only there be two or three to-day who are prepared to own the truth of the Body of Christ and the habitation of God, as they gather together in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, there will He be, and the ever-faithful Spirit will deeply bless such. God always honours faith, and we shall do well to remember that God's arrangements are ever better than man's. Further, we must not forget that these injunctions in 1 Corinthians xiv. are the *Lord's Commandments*, and long ago He said, "Behold, to *obey* is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry" (1 Sam. xv. 22, 23).

"But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant"

(ver. 38), is small comfort to all such. If any are ignorant that Paul wrote with God's authority in this matter, it is ignorance indeed; let such be bound in their ignorance. The simple and spiritual will be delivered. Any one filled with the Spirit will own that what Paul here gives us, is the expression of God's wisdom, and came from Him to His Assembly for its blessing. The conclusion of it all is this, "Wherefore, brethren, *covet* to prophesy, and *forbid not* to speak with tongues" (ver. 39). We must not have any man-made rules in God's Assembly, to check His Spirit, or lessen the activity of His Spirit; and the great sin of Christendom, I repeat, has been the quenching of the Holy Spirit, by introducing rules and regulations as to the Assembly clean contrary to the Lord's commandments here given.

"Let all things be done decently and in order" (ver. 40) is a very lovely word for our hearts to heed. It is like an inscription that runs right round the inside of a building. In chapter iii. the Assembly of God is presented under the *figure* of a temple. As I draw near, and am going up the steps, I see written over the portico, "*He taketh the wise in their own craftiness*" (1 Cor. iii. 19). That is God saying to us, *If you come in here, you will be found out.* I go inside, and I see a beautiful golden belt running all round the building, and inscribed on it, "*Let all things be done decently and in order.*" And what is the Divine order? The order that comes in chapters xii. and xiv. Whether you and I are walking in the due order is the question each must answer for himself before the Lord. He who is so walking will agree with me that God's Assembly is indeed THE FREE CHURCH of Scripture.

LECTURE VII.

Gifts, Ministry, and Local Office.

(Eph. iv. 7-12; 1 Tim. iii.)

WE have been looking from various points of view at the great truth of the gift of the Spirit, and now I want to draw your attention to the difference that there is between the *gift* of the Spirit and the *gifts* of the Spirit. Now every Christian has the gift of the Spirit; but it does not follow necessarily that every believer should have what is spoken of in Ephesians iv. as a spiritual gift. I should like also to show the way in which Scripture speaks of the exercise of these spiritual gifts, and what is the outcome thereof, and then allude briefly to the subject of elders and deacons, *i.e.*, local office. In spiritual gifts, on the one hand, and local office on the other, when all was in its normal order, we have the expression of the tender love of Christ for His Assembly during His absence.

We read in Ephesians v. 25-27, that "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it (the *bygone* aspect of His love in death); that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word (the *present* aspect of that love, where the gifts and the offices of elder and deacon may come in); that he

might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish." This last is the *future* aspect of His love, as well as being the eternal thought of God, who has called us, and, whether for time or eternity, made us to be accepted in the Beloved, "holy, and without blame before him in love." That is the place which Ephesians i. now gives to every individual believer; while the verses just quoted show what the Assembly collectively will be for Christ in glory—His Bride, the partner of His everlasting joys.

In the meantime Christ has given all that love could give, as we read in chapter v.: "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church" (ver. 29). And what are nourishing and cherishing? Nourishing is food, and cherishing is warmth of affection. You have the truth ministered by the gifts the Lord gives — that is the nourishment, and saints need nourishment. And then, in the beautiful way in which elders and deacons come into the normal practical life of the Assembly, we have the thought of cherishing—that is, everything the body can need while here upon earth, that blessed Head in glory has given: not merely the ministry of all that He is to our souls to form us like Himself, but no detail of tender care for His own is wanting on His part.

There are three chapters where we have gifts brought before us. There is no detailed list of them in Scripture in one place. Some are alluded to in Romans xii., others in 1 Corinthians xii., and others here in Ephesians iv. The difference, I think, is this—the source and spring of the gifts, in Romans, is God; in 1 Corinthians xii. it is all the activity of the Holy

Ghost; the gifts are traced for their source to the Spirit on earth "dividing to every man severally as he will," and now here (Eph. iv.), it is the Lord, as the Head of the Body now in glory, who furnishes all that is essential for the edification of His Body, whatever it may be. He, in His sovereign grace selects certain vessels in which He is pleased to deposit a spiritual gift. That is important. It is not a question merely of some natural qualification—of ability to speak; that would not necessarily be the ministry of the Holy Ghost. A man might be a beautiful speaker, and yet there be no profit, power, or unction in what he said, because he is not the possessor of a spiritual gift. On the other hand, a man might not have natural eloquence, but, if he have this gift from Christ, his ministry is acceptable, gracious, comes with unction, and is for profit. Ministry—true ministry—is, then, the exercise of a spiritual gift.

"But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men" (vers. 7, 8). As a man He went up. The source, therefore, of these gifts, is the ascended Christ in glory, and it is a great thing when people see that. It is not human education, though that is not to be despised and set aside; it is not a question of the natural capacity created in the vessel, though the gift of Christ will not be without this, much less that of college training through which men go to learn what men can teach them. No, the absolute and only source of spiritual gift is an ascended Christ, the Head of the Body. When He went up He "led captivity captive," the power of Satan was broken, and the great present proof of

it is that He takes up those who have been Satan's captives, makes them the depositories of these gifts, and sends them out to deliver by the truth those who are as they were once.

Christ is now the Victor, Satan is defeated, and his captives are taken up by the Lord, who says, I shall put into them a gift, according to My sovereign pleasure, and I will make them the ministers of My grace in the spot of man's defeat, and where Satan's energy was seen on every hand. This action of the Lord, described in Ephesians iv. 8, is a quotation from Psalm lxviii. 18, "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them" — the last clause being omitted by Paul, the point being that men were to be the recipients of these spiritual gifts from the exalted Christ. Then they were to exercise them, and that is true ministry. When it is seen that ministry is the exercise of a spiritual gift, which Christ has conferred, that makes every one who has received the gift responsible to the Lord, and dependent upon the Lord, for the exercise of his gift in its own particular sphere, whatever that sphere may be.

Now when it says, "And he gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers" (ver. 11), it does not mean He gave to them *to be* apostles, or *to be* prophets; but the man with his gift is given by Christ to His Body, the Church. "He gave some apostles, and some prophets," who had their place, as we have seen, at the foundation, and remain to us in their inspired writings; "and some evangelists," through whom the

Church is gathered; "and some pastors and teachers." The last two gifts are bound together, for they usually are combined in one person, and are found together in the ministry of the Word of God, by which the Church is built up and fed.

We have seen already what an important place the apostles and prophets held: "Ye are . . . built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" (chap. ii. 20). They laid the foundation, and when the foundation of a house is once laid, you do not need to be always at it; you then go on with the building. Consequently you would not expect to have them, in their living ministry, in this day. They remain with us, but only in their writings, and in the unfolding of the truth which God has preserved for us in the holy Scriptures, and that is where our faith rests.

Then as to evangelists: observe here that it is in the up-building of the body that the evangelist comes in. It is by this gift that God's grace goes out so largely to the world to save souls, and thus the Church is formed. In 1 Corinthians xii. there is no word of an evangelist. The omission of the evangelist there is easily apprehended. The Assembly as constituted on earth is before the apostle, and, of course, there the evangelist has no work—his business is outside to gather souls in. But here, where it is a question of "the perfecting of the saints," "the work of the ministry," and "the edifying of the body of Christ," you find the evangelist comes in. He is one who goes out with his heart full of the love of God, and full of love to men, to win them to Christ. He carries Christ to men, and seeks to bring men to Christ. He loves souls. It is not a question,

again I say, of being able to speak with volubility and great natural power—the gifts of Christ are carefully distinguished from this kind of thing in Matthew xxv. 15—it is more the idea of a fisherman seeking to catch fish. It is a gift that deals with the individual soul as well as the multitude, as seen in Acts xvi., "And we sat down, and spake unto the women" (ver. 13). It was quiet intercourse, the pressing of the claims of Christ, and the love of Christ on souls, and they were won.

The evangelist's place, however, is very important, because if there be no evangelists, there will be no gathered Assembly to be the object of the pastors' and teachers' care. There is a little tendency on the part of some to look down upon the evangelist. Regarding his work, I have heard it said, "It is only the gospel." But that is the revelation of the heart of God; and if you can bring the revelation of the heart of God into the midst of midnight darkness, sin, and misery, what a wonderful privilege. When people say they have got "beyond the gospel," they will very soon become like dry sticks, because they have got out of the current of God's love. The first work of God in souls is the new birth by His Word and Spirit, and this may be effected through the evangelist, who carries God's message, and brings the soul into the light and liberty of His grace. The ultimate object, however, of this work, is that the soul may be set consciously in its place in the body of Christ. If there be no winning of souls there can be no adding of stones to Christ's building, a consideration which every child of God and every local Assembly should weigh.

I think we ought to be careful to-day both to build,

and to see into what we build. Many evangelists to-day are what are called "free-lances," they are not at all careful as to the present object of God for the souls who are converted through their ministry; indeed, many do not know where to bring them, everything is so out of order. Still there is a Divine order, and the evangelist, if labouring rightly, should work out from, and in fellowship with, the Assembly. He ought to be a downright backbone churchman, according to God's revelation of what the Church is, and when he has got his stones out of the quarry—the world—he should know where to take them—viz., to God's Assembly. Many a man to-day does not know where to put them; he tips them on the road like a cart of stones, as it were, and is not exercised as to their being put in their right place in God's building. That is not Divine order. In Scripture all is very simple; the evangelist works and brings souls to the Assembly, where the pastors and teachers attend to them. But the evangelist is very unwise if he introduce his own converts into the Assembly. He should let others do that. He should bring them to those who were in Christ before them, who will need to be satisfied that they really are the children of God. That kind of testing is the porter's work. They keep the door of the house. We read of them in Solomon's days. Their *names* are given in 1 Chronicles ix. 17, 18; their *numbers*, four thousand, in xxiii. 5; their *courses* in 2 Chronicles viii. 14; and their *service* in xxxv. 15. Good porters are very valuable; they let in those who should be in the Assembly, and keep out the others.

The only man who is called an evangelist in Scripture is Philip. In Acts viii. he was doing a wonderful

work in Samaria. Many were converted through his preaching and were baptized, and thus were admitted outwardly to the House of God. Simon the sorcerer was one who believed and was baptized, and I have no doubt Philip thought he had caught a big fish that day. Doubtless he was a sanguine man; and if an evangelist is not sanguine and hearty he will soon get damped and discouraged, because he will be sure to have much cold water thrown on him. People who cannot do his work are adepts at telling him how he should or should not do it. But presently Peter came down, bringing more spiritual power and perception, and his judgment regarding Simon was, "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God" (Acts viii. 21). Peter played the part of a porter that day and kept Simon out. Be thankful if you get souls converted, but do not attempt to pitchfork them into the Assembly. Let the porters handle them. The value of a good porter is that he lets in what ought to be inside, and keeps out those who should not be allowed to come in. The porter's work therefore is very important; it keeps the Assembly of God from defilement by the entrance of the unconverted and religiously unclean. Not that I mean that there is now any such formal office, but that the saints should have this godly care as to those who are admitted among them.

The next gifts mentioned here are the pastors and teachers. The pastor is more occupied with the need of the soul, the difficulties that crop up in the spiritual life of the dear sheep and lambs of Christ's flock. The pastor gets close to the person; he is a man who moves in and out among the saints, and seeks to help them. There are very few of them in evidence to-day.

The reason, I judge, is this; they are hampered and hindered by their religious environment, and they fear to offend those whom they think have a special charge of people's souls. Thus many a Christ-given pastoral gift is dwarfed and blighted in Christendom's systems. The pastor's gift is very quiet and unobtrusive, for preaching is not the point with such. They love the sheep of Christ, seek their growth, their blessing, and are like a shepherd—going in and out among the sheep, taking out the thorns and briars that may have got in, and seeking to remedy anything that is wrong. It is very quiet, unobtrusive work, but very blessed, and most useful.

There is a notion that a "pastor" is a man set over a "congregation." That idea is in people's heads, but not in Scripture. There is no such thought in God's Word as a man being *a* pastor over *a* Church. Christ gave pastors to *the* Church, and if a man be a pastor, or a teacher, he is such for the whole Assembly.

The teacher is occupied with the book. The evangelist is working for souls *outside;* the pastor deals with the sheep *inside;* and the teacher digs, delves, and works away at *the Scriptures;* he finds them a perfect mine of hidden treasure, and then he brings out and imparts by his ministry the truth which is so blessed and so refreshing for our souls to heed.

The danger to-day is of pitting one gift against another. If you say, "I like the evangelists, but do not care so much for the teachers," you are very foolish, and also will remain very ignorant, because you are shutting your ears to what God is giving. And if you say, "I like the teachers, for I want instruction, but I do not think much of the evangelists," you are equally wrong, for they are both the gift of

Christ. We must accept all that the Lord gives, and be thankful for everything.

When these gifts are seen working harmoniously together, how blessed it is. The evangelist goes out, seeks, wins, and gathers souls, and then they are brought to the Assembly. And what then? The Assembly lets them into her bosom where God dwells, where Jesus is known, where the Holy Spirit ministers Christ, and leads out the hearts of God's children in happy praise and worship. But you say, perhaps, "They are not very intelligent, these young converts." How intelligent were you and I when we were admitted to God's Assembly? I was exactly seven days old—converted one Sunday night in London, and in the bosom of a little Assembly of God's dear children a hundred miles down in the country, and breaking bread the next Sunday morning. That was very quick, you say. It was not too quick for me, nor for the Lord in His precious grace to me. I was very unintelligent, but I saw that a privilege was afforded me of taking my place with the Lord's people, to show forth His death in the breaking of bread, and I seized my opportunity and have never regretted it.

The affection that takes charge of the babes is a thing that ought to mark the Assembly of God, and I fear is somewhat lacking now-a-days. When a babe is born a nurse is needed. Three-quarters of the babes in this city that die, are badly nursed, or not well fed. There is some folly on the part of the nurse. And many that are born into the family of God are not well cared for. Who is to care for them? They ought to find a nurse among His saints. If you are seeking to serve Christ, *you* should take care of them

and help them. If God's saints were more occupied in this way, there would be less time for profitless conversation. If we were busy helping each other, nurturing the newborn, and nourishing souls generally, we should find the body growing and the saints being perfected, and that is the way things are presented here, in Ephesians iv. It is a body, and it grows by the mutual activity of its various members, who play into each others' hands, so to speak, and the result is there is "the edifying of itself in love" (ver. 16).

I have little doubt that the special work of the pastor and the teacher is "the perfecting of the saints" individually; because it is of no use our knowing truth collectively and corporately unless we are individually in a spiritual state of nearness to Christ. That being lacking, there is the danger of becoming boastful, that we have truth and light, and are on the ground of the Church of God. None can say, "*We are it*," though we seek to walk in the truth of it; but, if there be not holiness, and growth individually in the knowledge of Christ and moral resemblance to Him, of what good is the possession of truth? None.

But a person might say to me, "We have been accustomed to understand that men who wrought after this sort, specially the pastors and teachers, had some kind of qualification or *locus standi* given them by man." Where is that taught in Scripture? That is my question put to you. What is the answer? Nowhere. You search the Scriptures of the New Testament till you find it. You will search long enough and in vain. Do I hear you say, "Then that is a deathblow to all the systems of Christendom." I admit it, but inasmuch as neither you nor I wrote the

Scriptures, we are not responsible for the result of our inquiry, though we may be all the better for the discovery. But what about those people who are called "Ministers of Christ"—the clergy—who can be found on all hands to-day having an official position? Many of them are, no doubt, dear children of God, and real servants of Christ; but they have allowed themselves to be put into a position that most certainly the New Testament gives no warrant for. You may search it from Matthew to Revelation, and I am persuaded you will not find one single instance of a man being set apart to preach the gospel by man, nor of a man being set over *a* Church as *its* minister. You will say, "But surely there is such a thing as ordination." Certainly, but not to preach the Word of God. Spite of that God takes care that His Word shall be preached. We find in Acts viii., regarding the Assembly at Jerusalem, that when "they were *all* scattered abroad," they "went everywhere preaching the word" (see vers. 1-4). Who ordained them?

You may reply, "What about Acts xiii.?" Let us look at it.

"Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain *prophets* and *teachers;* as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As *they ministered to the Lord*, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for *the work whereunto I have called them.* And when *they* had fasted and prayed, and laid *their* hands on them, *they* sent them away. So they, being *sent forth by the Holy Ghost*, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus" (vers. 1-4). That is a stock passage for ordination.

The various sections of Christendom to-day say, "There is our warrant for ordination." We must examine that statement in the light of the fact that Barnabas and Saul (who is also called Paul) had *already* been preaching the Word of God for years, I do not know how many. Did the Assembly at Antioch set Paul and Barnabas apart for apostleship? They are both called apostles in Acts xiv. 14. Perhaps you have not noticed in 1 Corinthians xii., it says, "And God hath set some in the church, *first* apostles, *secondarily* prophets, *thirdly* teachers" (ver. 28). That was God's order, and could numbers two and three appoint number one? No. Paul says in Galatians i., "Paul, an apostle (not *of* men, neither *by* man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead)" (ver. 1). Had man aught to do with his apostleship? Not a bit. He is emphatic on the point, and tells us also how he started his preaching. Read in the same chapter: "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately *I conferred not with flesh and blood*" (vers. 15, 16). He lets us know that his apostleship was directly from God, and that man had no hand in it whatever. When he had been converted and turned to the Lord, he "conferred not with flesh and blood," because a servant must be dependent on the Lord, and the Lord alone. What, then, is the meaning of Acts xiii.—of the Assembly laying their hands on the apostles?

Observe, it was the Holy Ghost that said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." They were in a very nice state in that

Assembly — a company of priests in the happy exercise of their priesthood. They were ministering to the Lord, not to the people. Most people's idea of ministry is what comes to us; but there they *ministered to the Lord.* "And the Holy Ghost said" —the Spirit of God was in the House of God on earth, and His voice was heard, how I do not know— "the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them" (ver. 2). The Assembly was in full fellowship with what the Holy Ghost was going to do, for "when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by" — the Assembly? No — "by the Holy Ghost." What to do? To make this special missionary tour amongst the Gentiles, which was so blessed, and of which Acts xiii. and xiv. are so full. But you say, "They went forth from Antioch." Of course they did; and had the full fellowship of that Assembly in their work.

Now kindly look at the end of chapter xiv. "And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia: and thence sailed to Antioch, *from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God* for the work which they fulfilled. And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles" (vers. 25-27). They go out with the full fellowship of the Assembly, and prayer, and the like, and having done their work they go back, and are able to tell what God had wrought. If servants of Christ did that now, they would very likely be accused of being occupied with themselves and

their work; but people were very simple in those days.

I think the youngest child can see the force of the passage, and also what profound ignorance it evinces to try and squeeze ordination—which means the Church or its representatives giving a license or title to men to preach the Word of God—out of it. Both of these men had been preaching long previous to this tour. We read in Acts ix. that Paul "preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God" (ver. 20). This was at Damascus. Then later, "At Jerusalem he spake boldly in the name of the Lord" (ver. 29). Then of Barnabas we read that the Assembly at Jerusalem, having heard of God's work at Antioch, "sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. Who when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." He here is seen preaching to the young converts, but after a while he desired the company and help of Paul, whom he had befriended at Jerusalem (see Acts ix. 26, 27). So we read: "Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: and when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year *they assembled themselves with the church, and taught* much people. And the disciples were *first called Christians* at Antioch" (Acts xi. 25, 26). The reason of this last statement, I conclude, was that there was so much of Christ in and about the disciples that they got the name of Christians.

These scriptures shatter the ordination theory as regards Barnabas and Saul absolutely, and equally so as to what is before us in Acts xiii. 2-4, being a warrant for the ordination of ministers now-a-days.

What took place was very simple, and the intent thereof very plain. The Holy Ghost separated Barnabas and Saul for a special service, and the Assembly identified itself with the apostles, as they laid their hands on them. The laying on of hands has several meanings in Scripture, but chiefly that of identification with, which is incontestably the purport of the action in this passage. There is nothing to hinder that being done to-day, so far as I see in God's Word. Suppose a gifted brother has the sense that the Lord has called him to go abroad to preach the Word; the local Assembly where he has lived and laboured loves and values him, and prays for him in view of his new sphere of labour. I do not think they would be wrong if they also put their hands *upon* him. Only if you do this you must then be prepared to put your hand into *your* pocket to help him, or else your prayers are mere words, and your laying on of hands —signifying your identification with him—would be hypocritical, for you would not be really interested in the work. That is the idea of laying on of hands—identification. We must think whether he has anything to go out with, because "the labourer is worthy of his hire" (Luke x. 7).

The gifts given by Christ are for the good of the whole body, hence their disposition only Christ can order. The idea and practice abroad to-day, that men can be sent here and there, called and dismissed by Churches, has no foundation in Scripture—there is not a line of it there. That servants of Christ should be ordained for ministry by men, and may then be put into a clerical position by men, is equally a figment of man's mind. This ordering of the servants, and putting them here and there, is unknown in

Scripture, and really contrary to the teaching of the Word of God. Not even an apostle would order a servant. Barnabas went a long journey, found Paul, and brought him to Antioch. That was all right, and showed the individual interest of each in the work of the Lord. To invite a servant of God is very nice; but he is responsible to take his orders from the Lord, and not from men.

Paul is very careful in regard to that. When Paul could not go to Corinth himself, he might and did wish that Apollos would go; but he would not, and Paul takes good care to tell us so. "As touching our brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren: but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he shall have convenient time" (1 Cor. xvi. 12). Apollos had a sense, I take it, from the Lord, that the moment had not arrived for him to go to Corinth, and therefore he did not go. Paul deemed it advisable, but each servant was free, and could only act as guided by the Lord, and it was not at all clear to Apollos that the Lord called him to go. Paul records the circumstance to give the saints this truth, that in the exercise of his ministry the servant gets his orders from the Lord, and his supplies also. This great apostle could not direct Apollos to go here or there. I think a smaller man than Paul would have kept that fact back. Any one who had not a big heart and mind would not have written this. We do not usually publish our failures. Paul records it to maintain the sense of the individual freedom and responsibility of the servant of the Lord, to act before the Lord, and the Lord only.

Now let us look at the other side of the subject. There *is* such a thing in Scripture as ordination, but

it does not appear in connection with the ministry of the Word, or the exercise of spiritual gifts. It is found in relation to that which, for want of a better term, is spoken of as "local office," *i.e.*, elders and deacons. In 1 Timothy iii., we get the way in which the Spirit of God presents the truth as regards *local* functionaries, *i.e.*, the qualities they must have to fit them for ordination. There we read, "This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work" (ver. 1). "Bishop" is the same word as used in Acts xx., where Paul sends for the *elders* of the Church to meet him. "Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you *overseers*" (bishops) (ver. 28).

Thus these elders were bishops, or overseers. It is from the word πρεσβυτέρος, an elder, that the formula of presbyterianism has come—the presbyter was an elder. How did the elder in Scripture become a bishop or overseer? The fact of his being an elderly man was not enough, save, perhaps among the Jewish Assemblies (see 1 Pet. v. 2-5). He was put in the official position of the eldership by an apostle, or an apostolic delegate, such as Timothy or Titus, and in that position he was certainly "ordained" as an elder. In Philippi, where everything was in beautiful order, the apostle says in his address to that company, "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons" (chap. i. 1). Everything was in order then, and what was the office of a bishop or overseer—ἐπίσκοπος? To overlook or have oversight. There were many necessary qualifications, but they were very simple. They must be blameless, "the

husband of one wife." Polygamy was common then —Paul says, he must have but one wife. For an elder to have more dependent upon him, as might easily have been the case with many converted from heathenism, would be an occasion of scandal. He was to be "vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker." It seems strange now that such injunctions should be necessary, but the Assembly had only been lately formed, and these people were brought out from heathendom, where all sorts of abominations went on. He was to be "one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity" (ver. 4). If his own house were not in order, he was not fit to rule in God's house. Again, "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil" (ver. 6). One young in the truth might get puffed up with the position and place.

"Moreover he must have a good report of *them which are without;* lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil" (ver. 7). Some people say, You must not listen to what the world says. God bids us do so. It is a totally false principle to assert the contrary. God's Assembly is the temple of the Holy Ghost, and the man that is going to fill an official position in it must have a good report of them that are without. The world reads us up and down as clearly as possible, and in the long run they have a very fair judgment—whether we are honest, straightforward Christians, or whether there is chicanery in our history. God says, Have a good report. If a man were not careful in his walk, Satan would be able to trip him up, and the world would know of it most

likely. If a man gets a position in the Church of God, Satan will more than ever seek to trip him up, and there will be dishonour to the Lord. We must all walk warily. Further on in the epistle we hear again of the bishops. "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine" (chap. v. 17). There were some who had a gift from Christ, as well as their office from the apostle, and they were to be especially esteemed. Eldership in a city did not make them ministers of the Word necessarily, but if they were gifted of the Lord to "labour in word and doctrine," so much the better. Their position as elders did not, however, qualify them for ministry, either locally or abroad. But it must be borne in mind that eldership *per se* was purely a *local* office. Their gift from Christ was good for everywhere, hence the order to care for them in temporal things. "For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward" (chap. v. 18). If they were devoted to the Lord's work entirely, they were to be taken care of. If they had given themselves to the work of the Lord in this way, moving in and out among the saints, with that lovely ministry that was of a pastoral character, they were to be looked after. This agrees with similar instructions regarding servants: "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things" (Gal. vi. 6). "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?" (1 Cor. ix. 11)

But now the important question arises: How were the elders appointed? Turn to Acts xiv.: "And

when they (the apostles) had *ordained them elders in every church*, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed" (ver. 23). There you have the distinct statement as to how the elders were *appointed*. We have no intimation from Scripture that the Church was competent to choose them; they might choose their deacons (see Acts vi. 3), but as to elders, it was an apostle, or an apostolic delegate who alone could select them, so far as Scripture teaches, and *they* only ordained them. The Assembly did not then choose the elders—that seems manifest.

We get a little further light on this subject in 1 Timothy v. 19: "Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses." "*Lay hands* suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure" (ver. 22). Were they ordained by the laying on of hands? Scripture does not say so. Timothy was instructed to be very careful whom he identified himself with, and the injunction, "lay hands suddenly on no man," may, by implication, carry the thought that thus he ordained elders, but the omission of any statement to this effect is very important, hence you could not say they were appointed by the laying on of hands. They were appointed by the apostles, or by Timothy, or Titus. Of the latter we read, "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and *ordain elders* in every city, as I had ordered thee" (see R.V., Titus i. 5). Manifestly Titus had the duty committed to him of appointing elders. It is important, however, to see this, that nowhere in Scripture is there any thought of appointing elders, *save* by *apostles*, or *apostolic delegates*. The Apostolic

Church had not the power of so doing so far as God informs us.

May we not then appoint elders to-day? If you are Paul, or Timothy, or Titus. The Church did not then do it, nor has the power been transmitted, so far as any teaching in Scripture reveals. It is quite true that the custom obtains to-day, but without the warrant of Scripture, or the necessary authority from God; hence, though men *may* do it, for reasons I will presently give, the appointments partake rather of the nature of assumption—it not being God's mind at all.

Let us now look again at 1 Timothy iii., where we read of deacons: "Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless" (vers. 8-10). They were to be men of experience, and gravity; in whom the saints could have confidence. "Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things" (ver. 11). It is very remarkable that the deacon's wife has *her* character indicated. There is not a word about the elder's wife, except that he must have only one. You cannot commit the money of the Assembly to a man who has not a wife of this character, because a deacon's office took him to the homes of the saints, in dealing with cases of temporal need, and in many instances a woman's tender touch would be much better than a man's, and thus a woman's ministry would come in in a lovely way. Further, if she were not wise, she might talk of what came before them in dealing with the circumstances of the Lord's people, and it might be passed on to others, and slander be

the result. It is thus easy to see why a deacon must have a wife who could be a helpmeet to him in the work of the Lord.

"Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus," is the next statement (vers. 12, 13). I think these two things, the "good degree" and "great boldness," are interesting, and you find each of them beautifully illustrated in Acts, first in the case of Stephen, and secondly in Philip. Turn to chapter vi. where we read: "And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration" (ver. 1). The Grecians were those Jews who had been born, or lived among the Greeks, and spoke their language, but still retained Jewish thoughts and worship, and now they were converted. Things in God's Assembly then were very lovely—they had but one purse; but these Grecians thought their widows were being neglected. "Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business" (vers. 2, 3). These the Assembly might choose. That was quite right, because the saints had put their money into the Lord's treasury. It was no longer theirs when it was given—it was the Lord's; and now some of the Lord's servants are to be chosen to deal with the disposition of the money,

who would have the confidence of the saints in doing so, and thus they have a voice in their appointment. "And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed *they laid their hands on them*" (vers. 5, 6). There we again undoubtedly get ordination. The seven were put in this official position of deacons, though the word is not used of them here. It is also quite clear as to *how* they were ordained—the apostles only did it. The Assembly might *choose* them, but the apostles *ordained* them; as to elders, apparently the apostles both *chose* and *ordained* them.

And who were the seven men chosen? We should have thought a fair way of electing them would be to choose four Jews and three Grecians, or three Jews and four Grecians. Do you know what grace did that day? The Assembly, composed so largely of Jews, chose seven Grecians, as we know by their names. That is the way in which grace triumphs, for it was a lovely high tide of grace that day. It was as if they said, Dear brethren, if you cannot trust *us*, we can trust *you*—we will choose seven of the class that have been aggrieved. What a lesson for us all!

In chapter vii., Stephen, in the exercise of a spiritual gift which the Lord conferred on him, gave that wonderful address, and sealed his testimony with his blood. He had used his diaconate well, and purchased to himself "great boldness in the faith." Anything grander and bolder than Stephen that day I defy you to find in Scripture.

Philip purchased his "good degree" also in Jeru-

salem at that time. When Stephen passed off the scene, great persecution broke out, the Assembly was broken up, and in Acts viii. we find Philip going down to Samaria, and carrying on a wonderful work in that city. In virtue of what? His diaconal ordainment? Clearly not. He had no longer anything to do with tables, but with a risen Christ in glory, and he had the privilege of exercising a gift which the Lord had given to him, and ministering what he had learned of Christ to the Samaritans. From that service he obtained from God the epithet, the title of "Philip the evangelist." In Acts xxi., "Luke, the beloved physician," says, that when the apostle Paul passed through Cæsarea, many years after, he "entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him . . . and we tarried there many days" (vers. 8, 10). How good to see the great apostle of the Gentiles staying with dear simple Philip the evangelist. That is how the Lord's various gifts were mixed up in practical life in that day—the great apostle and the earnest evangelist were together; they were not rivals, but co-workers, as the Lord ordained, and got on well together.

You might ask me, What authority then have we for appointing elders to-day? You have none, and for two reasons; because you have not *the* Church over which they were appointed, as in apostolic days, and you have not the *competent* ordaining power. First, it is manifest that you have not the apostles, or apostolic delegates; and secondly, where is the Assembly, say in this city, over which you would appoint elders or deacons? I could not go three hundred yards from here without finding men who would tell me they

were elders. Of *the* Church of God in Edinburgh? No, but elders of, shall I say rival churches which have no connection—perhaps are at war—with each other? Such, if faithful to their office, tend to keep the sheep apart. The perpetuation of the office that God let drop has had a deleterious effect upon the saints of God to-day. He forbore to perpetuate appointments that had to do with the order of the Assembly, because by the apostles He had to announce to us the break-up of that order—a break-up that had even begun before their withdrawal from the scene. It is folly of men to ape the power they do not possess, and to make appointments which only point out and perpetuate division, instead of maintaining unity, which was clearly their office at the outset, when the Assembly was one.

It is important to see that all that the Church really needs Christ will give. Further, I have no doubt that in any Assembly truly gathered to the Lord's name, upon the divine ground of the unity of the body of Christ, when saints are found together in any number, there will be men raised up of the Lord to do the work of elders, without assuming the place or position. The work will be done, and the saints will find blessing in submitting themselves to such, without any claim of formal appointment. Reality is always better than empty form.

What has been advanced regarding elders holds equally good as regards the formal appointment of deacons.

Outwardly the Church is in ruin, as the later epistles all unfold to us prophetically. That already was manifest, even when the apostles wrote, but in those epistles there is provision for faith, and inspired

instruction there provided for us in the day of evil, and if we are only simple before God, confident in Christ the Head, and have faith in the presence, sufficiency, leading, and guiding of the Spirit of God, there is as much blessing for the saints of God to-day as in any day. In Israel's day the deeper the darkness the brighter the grace of God shone out. Hezekiah's feast was better than Solomon's (see 2 Chron. xxx. 26); Josiah's was better than Hezekiah's—there had been none like it since Samuel's day (see 2 Chron. xxxv. 18); and as for Nehemiah's, there had been none like it since the time of Joshua (see Neh. viii. 17). There is blessing to-day for the saints of God as great as ever, if only they be obedient to His Word. We only want confidence in the Lord, faith in His love, and subjection to His Spirit.

LECTURE VIII.

The Candlestick and the Bride.

(Rev. i. 10-20, xxii. 16-21.)

IT is a remarkable thing that the testimony of the Spirit of God regarding the Church, as the Candlestick and the Bride, is found only in the book of Revelation. The reason is pretty simple. The Revelation is the book that gives us the issue of all things; it is emphatically the book of the throne, and the book of judgment. It gives you the final issue of all things, and eventuates in the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ over this hitherto sin-stained, but then cleansed and reconciled earth for a thousand years, which merges, after a little space, into the eternal day—the day of God.

What we have been looking at lately, in regard to the Church, is connected with the Spirit's day, and every saint of God should know and bear in mind that we are living in the Spirit's day, the day when the Holy Ghost is here to look after the interests of Christ; consequently obedience to Him is of the last importance. On the other hand, the book of Revelation unfolds with great clearness and detail—more than we find anywhere else—what the day of Christ will be, the millennial day (chap. xx.); and also

instructs us as to the day of God—that is eternity, when all things are of God, and God will be all in all (xxi. 1-8).

Let us now look a little at the chapter I have read. It presents the Lord Jesus in a totally new character, at least in the New Testament. The One John sees in this remarkable vision, is very unlike the blessed Jesus he had known in His earthly pathway, and of whom he had written so beautifully in his gospel—very unlike the One on whose bosom he laid his head, the night before He died for His Church. It is the same blessed Person, but He presents Himself in a very different character. He is seen here in the aspect of a judge—which gives its character to all the book; it is Christ taking up all things, and judging according to God. He is God, the first and the last, the Alpha and Omega (ver. 8).

John was "in the Spirit on the Lord's day," an exile in Patmos, when he had the vision he here records. On the day when Christians meet, the apostle, though all alone, and removed far from his brethren, enjoyed a special power of the Holy Ghost, and is thus an anointed vessel for Christ through whom to communicate His thoughts to the Assemblies in Asia. It is important to bear in mind that Asia, *i.e.*, the two little provinces of Asia Minor then so-called, had already turned away from Paul's ministry. He had said in writing to Timothy, "All they which are in Asia be turned away from me" (2 Tim. i. 15). They had turned away from the testimony that was peculiarly Paul's—the Pauline doctrine of the heavenly character of the Assembly—that which I have been seeking to unfold to you during these past few weeks. Asia where he had laboured most, Ephesus included, had

given it up. How early had declension set in. Yes, and now John was chosen of God to unfold the deeper defection that would yet transpire as seen in the Candlestick, and the consequent judgment of the Church and the world, and then bring out what God will yet effect, as seen in the Bride. Doubtless when the Emperor of Rome banished John to Patmos, he thought he was doing his own will. No; he was but carrying out the purposes of God. God wanted John to be alone, and in a spiritual state, to get His mind; and you and I also have to be "in the Spirit on the Lord's day"—that is the principle—if we are going to get God's truth in a day of evil, like the one we are in now.

The servant is prepared. He hears the voice of the Son of man, turns round and sees the responsible vessel of God's light on the earth—the seven golden candlesticks—and the Son of man in their midst. The Son of man and the Ancient of days are the same. The one Daniel described as the Ancient of days (Dan. vii.) is, as our chapter itself shows, the Lord Jesus Christ, only now become Man. The character in which He presents Himself, and is found among these seven golden candlesticks, is that of discriminating in an intensely solemn way. The Assemblies are first seen as seven distinct light-bearers; it was their position of witness for God in the world: yet the number seven suggests that there is more than this to be found in them. Observe, they are of gold—that is their proper character, divine righteousness—as set of God on the earth. Because of the dimness or utter lack of true light, God may take them away, but originally His hand set them up.

"And I turned to see the voice that spake with me.

And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength" (vers. 12-16). This is priestly discrimination. It was not like the Lord in service, in John xiii. 4, where He "laid aside his garments." Here, with garments down to the foot, He is the One who has to observe, to see, to discriminate the real condition, and to pronounce judgment thereon. It reminds one of the leper brought to the priest in Old Testament days (see Lev. xiii. xiv.). A state of things savouring of leprosy was under His eye, and He meets it judicially. His garment is down to His feet, and about His loins is the girdle of righteousness; eyes of fire of piercing divine holiness; His feet are as of one who had been Himself exposed to the searching test and found perfect in His path, hence the One fitted to judge the path of what professed to be His. His voice suggests majestic and irresistible power.

"And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead" (ver. 17). John was deeply impressed with what was before His eye; he felt the intense solemnity of the Lord presenting Himself to the Church in such an aspect, and we ought to be divinely affected by this scripture, because what comes before us is intensely solemn. "And he laid his right hand upon me, saying

unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last. I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of death and of Hades" (vers. 17, 18). He is in resurrection; all power is at His disposal, and that is a great thing to get hold of. All power is in the hands of the risen Man who is at God's right hand to-day triumphant over all the power of Satan, and He who is Head of the Church, viewed as His body, is here seen as the judge of that which, on earth, is His responsible vessel of testimony.

He bids John write "the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be after these" (ver. 19). This verse gives us the threefold division of the book of Revelation—the all-important key to it. "The things which thou hast seen," we get in chapter i.—the vision of Christ personally. "The things which are," are brought before us in chapters ii. and iii. The main features of the history of the professing Church of God, as long as it is here to be addressed, are presented under the figure of seven candlesticks. The whole epoch, from the Lord's departure until the Church is no longer here, is presented in these seven candlesticks; they are "the things which are," and they range from the day in which John wrote, to the moment of the taking up of the saints at the Lord's coming. The whole Assembly is really in view. The then state of the various Assemblies addressed serves the Lord to set forth prophetically the various states the Assembly would pass through and that should be found in it, till the Lord should come. The third and greater part of the book, "the things which shall be after these," opens at chapter iv. Nothing in it can

take place till the Church's history here has closed, and she is no longer on earth to be addressed. Further, "the things which shall be after these" comprehend all that which you have given you from chapter iv. to the end of the book *i.e.*, God's dealings with the world to the end of time, with a wonderful glance into eternity.

Then the Lord says: "The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches; and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches" (ver. 20). He explains the symbols. Seven is the symbolic number of completeness in Scripture; perfection in that sense—spiritual completeness. Not that there was perfection morally, but seven gives the whole number. There were seven local Assemblies, and in them the Lord gives us a panoramic view of what would take place during His absence, until the moment of the Rapture. Doubtless when the Lord takes away the candlestick, with every mark of detestation as to the state it has fallen into, as in Laodicea, Satan will take up what is left of the profession, then become his fitting tool for the development of that frightful church-world system afterwards portrayed in Babylon and its judgment. What was once espoused to Christ as a chaste virgin, according to the Church's true character—when all who are His are taken out of it—will come under the most awful judgment recorded in the book, as the great whore that sitteth upon many waters (chaps. xvii., xviii.).

These seven Churches we have already glanced at (see pp. 94-98). We saw that Ephesus indicated the time directly after the apostolic day, when heart-

declension from Christ began in the Church, as Paul had foretold. Smyrna answers to the times of persecution in which there was a brightening up of the saints. Pergamos refers to the time when the Church slipped into worldly ease, to dwell where Satan had his throne, when the Roman empire under Constantine became Christian. Thyatira was the outcome of this unfaithful alliance, the descent of the Church into the dark ages when it ruled the world, and is characterised as the depths of Satan. But, looking at that epistle, it is interesting to note that here for the first time the thought of the coming of the Lord is introduced, "But that which ye have already hold fast till I come" (Rev. ii. 25), and I have no doubt that the reason is this: there is no other outlook for faith, no further hope of the restoration of the ecclesiastical state. Thyatira goes on to the end. Ephesus became Smyrna; Smyrna became Pergamos; Pergamos became Thyatira—they are consecutive states, and Thyatira goes right on to the end, to the Lord's second coming (see Rev. ii. 25-28). But the states indicated by Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea, when they arise, go on also to the end. The first four were consecutive; the fourth and the last three are all collateral states, existing to the end together concurrently. Thus is God's panoramic view of what the Church would be during the absence of Christ presented to us.

In all these phases of the Assembly's existence the point to remember is that the object of her being left on earth was to be a light-bearer in the world. God had set the Assembly to be the true witness of what He has manifested in Jesus. She is to manifest what Jesus is now that He has gone on high. If she be a

false witness she will be removed. The candlestick is a vessel that receives the light, and has to bear the light. It is the Church, as the responsible vessel of testimony for Christ, which, during His absence (which constitutes the night), is responsible to give light to the world. If the Assembly cease to give light she will be removed, as Israel was, though, in the long-suffering of God, the judgment announced on the first defection of heart from Christ in Ephesus (ii. 5), is only finally executed in Laodicea.

Now why do we not read about the Church as the candlestick till we come to Revelation? Who had been God's responsible witness? Israel. Who had the temple, the oracles, the ark, everything? Israel. While Jerusalem existed, the temple was there, and outwardly to the world the candlestick was at Jerusalem. The Ethiopian eunuch travelled a thousand miles to go up to what he regarded as God's candlestick, but he found no light. The Church had become the light-bearer, but God does not address her as the candlestick till this moment, which we are considering in Revelation i.-iii.

God does not address His new witness under this title (the candlestick) till the old is completely set aside. For a long time Judaism and Christianity went on side by side in Jerusalem, and there was a great deal of vacillation on the part of the Hebrew Christians. They were to be found in the synagogue to-day and in the Christian company to-morrow; and that went on till the apostle Paul was writing to the Hebrews, and then came the emphatic injunction, "Let us go forth, therefore, unto him without the camp bearing his reproach" (Heb. xiii. 13). The camp was the place where God's name was dishon-

oured and out of which every faithful saint, that wanted the company of the Lord, must go. The Christian was called on to break with the old thing that God had given up.

God was very patient with His people. Judaism, as a system, was really dead—it died with Christ; it was nailed to the cross (see Col. ii. 13, 14); but the undertaker had not arrived to bury the body. The destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans took place about A.D. 70. The city was besieged, and though the Roman general gave imperative instructions to save the Temple, a torch was thrown in by a drunken soldier, and it was burnt to the ground. The Lord's words regarding its individual stones were literally fulfilled (see Matt. xxiv. 1, 2). The old candlestick was destroyed and everything scattered; and not till then is the Church addressed as the candlestick. Rome was the scavenger to whom God, as it were, said, Go and sweep that old, corrupt, polluted, and defunct system away. Then the old candlestick being gone, the Church is addressed in the way in which we see it in these chapters.

Then what was going on in the meantime? The Church was really the light of the world, but the world looked at Christians as being a sect of the Jews. Perhaps it had a brighter and happier place then, when in lowly grace and moral resemblance to Christ it lived like Him, and only for Him and His interests, than it had after it got the sense of its importance as a light-bearer; because the moment that idea gets into people's minds we know what takes place. She got the sense of her own importance and dignity, and declension set in. Then the Lord addresses her in the way in which these two

chapters speak. How deeply the Church has failed you and I know, and the Lord tells us distinctly here what the final result will be, He will spue out of His mouth that which has so failed. If you remember that the Church—the candlestick—is looked at as His light-bearer, and has utterly failed to justify her existence as such, you will have no difficulty when you come to the point where it is seen to be spued out of His mouth as something nauseous. When things come to be as they are depicted in Laodicea He must be done with it.

I said just now that we have four collateral or concurrent Churches—Thyatira, Sardis, Pergamos, and Laodicea. Thyatira is Rome, which goes on yet, and will till the Lord comes, gaining enormous ground in the interval—by leaps and bounds in this land. But other phases of things develop themselves before the end. Sardis, I have no doubt, is Protestantism—the Reformation; and thank God for it, and for the men who were used of Him to come out in defence of the Scriptures, and to rescue and give to the people the Word of God. It is not that the Lord here judges His own blessed work, but the result of it in man's hand.

The way in which the Lord presents Himself to each of these Churches is noticeable. The character which Christ takes exactly meets the condition of the Church to which He is speaking. To Sardis, which begins a new phase of the Assembly's history concurrently with Thyatira, He comes with the solemn and needed reminder (see chap. i. 16 and ii. 1) that all that mighty work that had brought out afresh the gospel, long lost in Christendom, if it had shaken kingdoms to their base, was of Him. It was He that

had the seven spirits of God in the complete manifestation of spiritual power; it was He that had "the seven stars." All constituted authority in the Church was under the direction of Christ to begin with. To the angel of the Church of Ephesus He had presented Himself as "he that *holdeth* the seven stars in his right hand." But an innovation had occurred in the action of the responsible vessel. The heads of the Reformed countries were constituted heads of the Church in those countries, as a defence against the Papacy, and thus Christ's place was disowned. But "he that hath the seven stars" will still remind the Church that however man may dispute His title, it is still His; and all subordinate authority can only be rightly exercised under Him during the night of His absence. Sardis, then, delineates Protestantism and its ecclesiastical organisations. The head of the State appoints to the highest offices in the Church; or, even apart from nationalism, man's will is rampant, and the Church will choose this man or that as its minister. The change from Christ *holding* the stars in His right hand, to "he that *hath*," is sorrowfully significant of Christ's estimate of what had now come about in Sardis for the first time—this new and unheard-of departure from His order. The working of man's will and unbelief are responsible for it.

"And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write: These things saith he that hath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead" (chap. iii. 1). It was not the open corruption of Thyatira, and had superior pretensions. There was no Jezebel, but a state of moral death existed. The works were not perfect before God according to the

revived truths. Spiritual energy was lacking. It is not enough to be a Protestant. It is of no use for you and me to be iconoclasts, who tear down what is wrong. Nothing comes of that kind of thing. Exposing and condemning what is wrong is of small value. Get the truth, buy it, sell it not, be it. Get it, and keep it, seek to be formed by it, and exhibit it. The Christian is called to that, the iconoclast misses the mind of God. But there are ever-smouldering embers of life in Protestantism that may be fanned into a flame, as in times of revival, here and there: hence He says, "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God" (ver. 2).

In the next verse we get the coming of the Lord introduced. "Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee" (ver. 3). But how is this? He will come as a thief in the night to the world, *i.e.*, without the slightest warning, "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape" (1 Thess. v. 3). Why warn Sardis of the world's aspect of His coming? Because it is the world. If it courted it in Pergamos, and ruled it in Thyatira, the world now rules the Church in Sardis, by the Church's consent, and world and Church are identical. Some day Christendom will be greatly surprised when it wakes up to find the Holy Ghost gone, the Church gone, every saint and servant of God gone; and what is left? A good deal; there is no doubt about that. Many that may still bear the

name of Christ, but they are really the world, the world-Church, and get the judgment of the world.

The address to Philadelphia is very lovely, and the characters the Lord takes there equally important to notice. "These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth" (iii. 7). Here we have what He is in His personal character, what He is intrinsically—the holy and the true—rather than what belongs to Him officially. The key of David is His—He has all power to introduce the kingdom, but he uses the key of power to open a present door before the time of the kingdom, and indicates who it is that will occupy it. "I know thy works: behold I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name" (ver. 8). "I know thy works"—it is quite enough that He knows them. Mary of Bethany's action at the supper was for Him, if even true disciples could characterise it as waste. The truly devoted heart, like Mary, will be quite content that the Lord only knows its works. "Thou hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name" (ver. 8). It does not sound much to say, but it is blessed commendation. If there ever was a day when the Word of the Lord was being given up, it is the day we live in. There are many in high ecclesiastical places who have given up the Word of God entirely, or are fast undermining its authority over the soul. They tell us the Pentateuch is not what it purports to be. Isaiah was a rhapsodist, and Daniel a novel for the entertainment of the Jewish mind, while the four Gospels are inconsistent, and Paul's writings to be

severely sifted. We get all that to-day, and, alas, Christians in hosts sanction it.

A Philadelphian is a person who holds on firmly and quietly to what God has given. "Thou hast a little strength, and hast *kept my word*, and hast *not denied my name*" (ver. 8). The two important things are His word, and His name. Now, is His name enough for you—the revelation of all that He is; and this in face of every effort to defame and dishonour Him? Such are the characteristics of these before whom Christ opens a door that none can shut. I should like to be a Philadelphian—the one He can commend. It is not knowing Assembly truth, and the like, but it is the knowledge of Christ personally and devotedness to Him—faithfulness to His word. If you are giving up His word in any measure, and are gathered to anything but His name you are not a Philadelphian. He is a person who has the sense of what will suit the Lord, and no matter who gives in, or who gives up the truth, he says, I am not going to. You then get the sense of His love and patience until He comes. "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: *hold that fast* which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (vers. 10, 11). The Lord's coming is here the hope of the heart. Then He will crown the faithful. Till then we must hold fast what He has given. That is a great principle—hold fast the truth of God. If you have it, be tenacious of it, because we live in a day of evil when every attempt will be made to move you from it, and from Him who is it.

Look now at the reward to the overcomer. "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God"—very likely he would not be regarded as a pillar anywhere else; for he is outside all that is regarded as ecclesiastical. He will be a pillar in heaven. As for recognition on earth he does not want it. Jesus says, I will make him "a pillar in the temple of my God; and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name" (ver. 12). For the man that is faithful to Christ in a day of declension and departure, there is a beautiful and blessed reward by-and-by.

Philadelphia consists, then, of moral suitability to Christ rather than what is ecclesiastical, though one answering to it will not leave out Christ's word as to the Church, any more than as to the individual. If you are to follow "righteousness, faith, charity, peace," it is "with those that call on the name of the Lord out of a pure heart." You will be sure to find others doing the same. You make for Christ, and then you will find yourself in the company of others that "call on the Lord out of a pure heart." That is Philadelphianism. That is a path open to us to-day. It may seem but little, but in a day of universal declension, coupled with much ecclesiastical pretension, on the one hand, and rationalistic reasonings of man's mind, swamping multitudes on the other, it is everything to keep the word of Him that is holy and true and not to deny His name. God grant that you and I may have a Philadelphian heart. I covet it above all things for myself and for you too.

"And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write: These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God" (iii. 14). Observe the characters the Lord takes here—"the faithful and true witness." The Church has been a false witness; she has been unfaithful and untrue; she is not that which He set her to be, and is to be displaced. But He who is the Amen of all that God had ever promised stands, and the creation that has Him for its beginning stands, whatever the ruin of the Church, not as Adam, who fell and dragged down all in his ruin. The last state of profession in the Assembly is characterised by lukewarmness. To Christ that is nauseous. He will spue it out of His mouth. There was want of heart, the worst of all evils.

"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth" (vers. 15, 16). The Lord cannot abide lukewarmness. What Laodicea had not got was heart for Christ, and the great thing for you and me to have is heart for Christ, affection for Christ. That is what He prizes above everything—affection for Himself. That was lacking, hence the peremptory threat of spueing out of His mouth. That is the final rejection of the Assembly on earth as the candlestick or responsible vessel of the testimony of Christ.

When will that be? At the moment of His coming for all that is real in it. Laodicea is what the Church has become to-day, evidenced by lack of affection, coupled with immense pretension. It is the professing Assembly boasting of resources in itself. "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have

need of nothing"—that is self-complacency, and self-congratulation without having Christ as the riches of the soul by faith. What deeper poverty could there be? Hence the next word: "And knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked"—that is how He regards what professes to be His Church in this scene, and records His judgment of its pretended acquisitions according to the scientific infidelity of the last days. "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire"—that is divine righteousness; it had not got that. How few know to-day what it is to be before God in all the blessed acceptance of Christ, and know that He is their righteousness, and that they are "made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. v. 21). He counsels all such to buy gold, "and white raiment, that thou mayst be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear." That is practical righteousness, that in which we shall shortly find the Bride arrays herself. Further He says, "And anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see" (ver. 18). People often say, I do not see all this about Laodicea. Do you not? Then you have not got eye-salve. You cannot buy that down here; no servant of God can give it to you. You must go to the Lord. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent" (ver. 19).

The end however is this — the Church has not repented, the outward testimony has absolutely failed, and when the Lord comes by-and-by she is utterly rejected. Her testimony was not only dim and dull, but practically null and void, and therefore He spues her out of His mouth. But till then He says, "Behold I stand at the door, and knock: if any

man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me "(ver. 20). He is outside, but ready to bless any who hear His voice.

Do not misunderstand this passage; it is not the question of a true Christian being lost, because every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, however feeble and young, born of the Spirit, washed in the blood of Christ, and sealed by the Spirit, is an integral part of the body of Christ, and therefore, that individual must be with Christ in glory, or He would not be content. If I had lost my little finger my body would not be perfect. Even so the body of Christ would not be complete if one member were missing. He will have His body by-and-by perfect. But the nominal profession of Christ is going to be rejected. The mere professor has missed eternal blessing—what God has offered, and he must come in for the judgment that will fall upon lifeless Christendom.

There is no mention of the Lord's coming here, but Laodicea goes on till then. The rapture is before the apostasy spoken of in 2 Thessalonians ii., and Laodicea, given up by Christ and adopted by Satan, will doubtless be involved in that, so, as I have said, to be judged as Babylon.

When the vessel of testimony is removed, Christ will come out as God's faithful witness, and He will put everything right. And now we turn to a much more blessed subject, that is the Bride—the Church looked at as the Bride of Christ.

In Revelation xix. we read of the marriage of the Lamb, and heaven then goes into an ecstasy of joy. That is clearly after the rapture of the saints, when the Lord takes out of this scene all that belong to

Him. What we read of in 1 Thessalonians iv. has taken place. The Lord has come into the air, and we are caught up to meet Him, and pass in to be with Him for ever; and I have no doubt by the time we reach what Revelation xix. 6-9 gives we shall have passed before the judgment seat of Christ, and every saint have received his reward for the pathway down here. That is what is alluded to there. "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: *for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints*" (vers. 7, 8). That is to say, we are all cutting out and now making on earth the garments we are going to wear by-and-by at the bridal feast. What we have been for Christ on earth will come out in that day; and that makes the holy and devoted life of a Christian a very serious and a very blessed thing.

We get, then, the marriage feast in chapter xix. The Bride is composed of all the Church of God, every saint, from the day of Pentecost to the last one brought in before the rapture of the saints. Those who are "called to the marriage supper of the Lamb" are saints of other dispensations. Being guests they cannot be the Bride, but, like John the Baptist, "rejoice greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice" (John iii. 29). The Bride is more fully spoken of in chapter xxi., which, in its opening section, presents the Assembly in her double relationship to Christ as His Bride, and to God as His tabernacle and dwelling-place—the home of the brightest manifestation of His glory for ever—the unchanging state that marks eternity, the day of God. "And I John saw the

holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, *prepared as a bride adorned for her husband*" (ver. 2). You have in verses 1-8 got past the millennial day, and have got into eternity; and John sees coming down from heaven the holy city, the new Jerusalem. She is apparelled as the Bride, which Paul shows us to be but another aspect of the Body of Christ, bringing out its place in His affections, as the truth of His body did not suffice for Him to do (Eph. v. 28-32). "He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as Christ the church, for we are members of his body," &c. She is "adorned for her husband." It is not here a question of display. We shall find a wonderful description of her as she will be displayed in the glory of the kingdom from chapters xxi. 9 to xxii. 5. Here, in the eternal state, it is what she is for her Husband alone—for no other eye but His. But, mark, it is as a Bride. The marriage of the Lamb has been celebrated in heavenly glory more than a thousand years before, yet in the unchanging freshness of the affection of Christ she comes out of heaven as a Bride, now for the first time indeed so characterised, and that for eternity.

We have seen that the Church is wholly heavenly by her calling. Here, in her eternal relationship to Christ, she comes down out of heaven. Not otherwise is it as to the truth of the Church's relationship to God as His temple or tabernacle. In the eternal day, when God takes up His dwelling-place in a new heaven and a new earth, the centre of the manifestation of His presence and glory will be the Assembly. In the day of God the tabernacle of God—the Assembly—is with men. We have known His pre-

sence here, as once "the Word became flesh and tabernacled (literally, John i. 14) among us." But that was but temporarily, for the world rose up to refuse His presence. Redemption accomplished, in His rejection, as one of the first precious fruits of it, the habitation of God was formed, in which, as we have seen, He took up His dwelling by the Spirit—"in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Here the Assembly comes out in its full purposed character, as grown to "a holy temple in the Lord," in which God will dwell with the redeemed for ever; yet true to His own blessed thought in coming down in Christ, and manifested here, He gives it the eternal name of Tabernacle. The Assembly has thus its own distinctive place and relationship for ever, the only distinction left amongst the redeemed; because it was not the fruit of sin, as the division of the world into nations, and Jew and Gentile, but of God's eternal counsels.

Lower down in the chapter we get more detail about the Bride. In verse 8 we reach the conclusion of all things relating to eternity—the eternal bliss of the blessed (vers. 1-7), and the eternal misery of the unsaved (ver. 8). But from verse 9 the Spirit of God takes you right back into a time state of things. For not only He knows how deeply important it is to the Bride to see all that she learned of herself, according to the truth of the Church's calling, carried out to its full result in heavenly glory, but, having shown the result of the false alliance of the Church with the kingdoms of the world, when they were *not* Christ's, in this remarkable appendix to the book we are allowed to see her true relationship with them when

they have "become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ" (chap. xi. 15), and she will be displayed in His glory to the millennial earth.

You find frequently in Scripture a very distinct, incisive statement containing the germ of some great subject which is elaborated afterwards in a most particular way. You get this illustrated in the opening verse of chapter xvii., where, by one of the same set of angels that had the seven vials, in each case, which prepares us for the connection and contrast, the seer is addressed in the same way as in chapter xxi. There it is, "*Come hither, I will shew thee* the bride, the Lamb's wife" (ver. 9). In chapter xvii., for a different object, the same words are used, "*Come hither; I will shew unto thee* the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters." Had there been any allusion to Babylon and her fall before this? Yes, in chapter xiv.: "And there followed another angel, saying, *Babylon is fallen, is fallen*, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication" (chap. xiv. 8). That is all that is said, and the subject changes. It is but one of the events that have to be brought on the prophetic stage of the last days in that chapter. You have the prophetical announcement that the false church system of the world, Babylon, where every principle of the flesh has obtained and is now headed up in full development, and the Holy Ghost is unknown, is fallen. Then in chapters xvii. and xviii. you are invited to see how the fall takes place. You have the Spirit of God giving two chapters descriptive of how the whole system of the world, fostered by a false church fully identified with it, comes under the judgment of God in the moment just before the Lord

Jesus comes out in manifest glory to execute the last stroke of judgment in person. Babylon's judgment is really carried out by the confederated men of the earth—the beast and the ten kingdoms of the revived Latin Empire (see chap. xvii. 15-18). But it is not till then that we have the espousals of the Lamb's wife in heavenly glory (chap. xix. 7-9). Yet in chapters iv. and v. the Church's place, with all that are Christ's at His coming, had been seen around the throne and the Lamb, as slain, in the midst of it. Do we not see the perfect wisdom of God in the seeming delay? The true bridal relation of the Church to Christ is only declared when that which had falsely assumed her place is set aside by the most appalling scene of judgment in the book (chaps. xvii., xviii.).

Now let us pass on to Revelation xxi., and have a look at the Bride of Christ, perfectly answering to His own heart and displayed in His glory. "And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain" (it was a wilderness when Babylon was in question, chap. xvii. 3) "and shewed me the holy city Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal" (vers. 10, 11). She is not called "new" here, because she is seen in her own proper heavenly character, coming down out of heaven. In Romans iii. we get, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (ver. 23). In Romans v. we are able to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (ver. 2). But here the Bride has the glory of God, "having the glory of God" (ver. 11). It is the Assembly looked at in this remarkable character. As suited to the kingdom, the Church is looked at under

the figure of a city, with which she is identified in the eternal state by verse 2.

Who have access to it? They which are written in the Lamb's book of life (ver. 27).

Who are the stones in that city? I see a good many here to-day—all the redeemed have the privilege of it, though all are not the body-politic itself, the special place of the Church. I do not very often ask people to look at themselves — I generally tell them to look away to Jesus; but you may get a good look at yourself here, and see what you are going to be like when with Christ in glory, for ever and ever. The city has the glory of God—the very nature of God, for "her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal" (ver. 11). In Scripture the jasper stone is expressive of the glory of God (see chap. iv. 3), which the creature can see, for He has a glory which no man can approach to. Everything that does not suit God is then outside, and it ought to be so now. But, alas! how its wall of true separation from all unsuited to its nature and calling has been broken down in ruin by our failure. Here that is fully seen, for it had "a wall great and high," and its separation will be absolute from all that does not answer to the glory of God, even as the building of the wall was of jasper (ver. 18), the symbol of that glory as seen in chapter iv. 3.

"The city had a wall great and high. . . . And the building of the wall was of jasper, . . . the first foundation was of jasper" (vers. 12, 18, 19). The glory of God is the foundation and protection, as well as the light and beauty of the heavenly city, for the Church is glorified with Christ in the glory of God.

All is "clear as crystal," and the wall implies separation. And as the city is seen to be holy then, so should they, who will comprise it, be now. God's Assembly is where Christ and the Holy Ghost are, and none are supposed to be inside except those who are the Lord's. It is the normal character of the Assembly to be holy, clean, separate, and suited to God. It will be such then—it *ought* to be so now.

You must not, however, suppose because Babylon is called a city, and the Bride, the Assembly, is here viewed as a city, that there will be a real city in either case. No, it is a figurative way of expressing that which God will bring out by-and-by in full display. It is what the Church is going to be with Christ in the millennial day, as suited to Him. Its nature is divine righteousness and holiness — gold transparent as glass. That which by the Spirit and Word of God is wrought in men here below, is the nature of the whole place. Man in the person of Jesus is going to reign over the new earth, and His Bride will be in association with Him then, for if we suffer now we shall also reign with Him then.

Now just look at John xvii. once more, to which the scene we are considering necessarily carries the mind, as it portrays the moment when the Lord's prayer will be answered. You must not suppose that the Lord prayed only for the apostles. He says, "Neither pray I for these alone, *but for them also which shall believe on me through their word*" (ver. 20). There is one feature that is always found in every one of God's family—they all believe on Him; and it is through the apostolic word we have believed. Do you believe? If so, you are of the family, and you are included in His prayer, "That they all may be one; as

thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may *believe* that thou has sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one" (vers. 21, 22). How did John see the holy Jerusalem, the Church, come down? "Having the glory of God." The glory which the Father has given Him as Son of man, He shares with His co-heirs, so that His desire is fulfilled in that glorious day, to the very words which He uttered: "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that *the world may know* that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me" (ver. 23).

In the millennial day, when the Church will be seen in the same glory as Christ, the world will believe how God has loved those whom He has given to Jesus. To-day they do not. They have missed the moment when they might have believed in Him, for they have not seen the Church walking in unity—to our shame be it owned—and have said, "Look at these Church wars and divisions; Christianity is all nonsense." They have made the worldliness and the inconsistencies of Christians an excuse for not believing, and think they have a solid basis for their unbelief. If the Church had maintained its divine unity, and walked in oneness together and in separation from the world, the latter might have believed its testimony to it, whereas now it thinks it has very good ground, not only to scoff at the Church for its worldliness, but reason also for its own unbelief in Scripture and in Christ. Should not this deeply affect us all? Surely, for our Lord is deeply dishonoured, and immortal souls around us are

actually stumbling over us into hell and its eternal judgment. Angels might weep at the sight. Do we ever shed a tear on this account? In the millennial day the world will *know*, when it is too late to believe, that we are one in Him, and that the Father loves us as He loves His Son. I do not think that every one in God's family knows it now. There would be great joy if they did, to think of being as dear to the Father as Christ was. Yet He has made full provision for our entering into it (see John xvii. 26). Do you know it? The world will assuredly, when it sees the Assembly, as the Bride of Christ, come down out of heaven to illuminate this scene, as surely it will, for "the nations shall walk in the light of it" (Rev. xxi. 24). Then they will say, "After all the Christians were right."

But in His prayer our Lord also said: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (John xvii. 24). That goes beyond the glory in which we shall be displayed, and carries us into the most intimate circle of the Father's house: which is not to be found in Revelation. The first part of Revelation xxi. (vers. 1-7) gives us the Church looked at in her eternal character as the Bride—what she is to Christ Himself—and, ver. 9 to chap. xxii. 5, as she will be in view of the world by-and-by. The world is most certainly going to learn what the love of the Father for His own is, and the moment indicated for that knowledge is, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Col. iii. 4). Wondrous privilege! We are going to

be the sharers of the glory of that blessed Man. What a destiny! Would you not like to share it?

The main testimony of the book is now over, and you have come to the appendix, as it were, with its special design of bringing out the Church's relationship with the kingdom, the details of the glory in which she will be displayed, bringing out so blessedly for our hearts what her true nature and calling is. But before the book closes, there is, as at the opening of it, a special address of Christ to the Church into whose hands it is put (chap. xxii. 16-21).

I commenced these lectures by quoting the Scripture which declares that "Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers" (Rom. xv. 8). That thought appears again in the last chapter of Revelation where the Lord's final words to the Church are heard: "I, Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star" (chap. xxii. 16). He says, I will make good every promise to Israel—Himself the ground and accomplishment of them—but not that only, "I am the bright and morning star." We read of the morning star before this in Revelation. To the overcomer in Thyatira the Lord said, "I will give him the morning star." That forms no part of prophecy. It is the Lord's coming, and he who has the morning star will share in the millennial blessing that follows. The morning star is Christ personally — the heavenly Bridegroom—now known in glory by the watching Christian, while the world is buried in slumber. It is interesting to see that the Old Testament closes with the rising of the "Sun of righteousness," and the New

Testament with "the morning star." Every one knows that the morning star is always seen in the heavens just before the sun gets up. Thus Revelation xxii. 16 has its fulfilment before Malachi iv. 2. The latter is Christ coming in glory into the world as the King; the former is the Bridegroom presenting Himself as the One coming for His Bride.

The moment He so presents Himself, touching on her own special portion, look at the effect on the Bride. "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (ver. 17). The Holy Ghost, spite of all the ill-treatment He has received, is still on earth and yet dwelling in the Assembly, and produces these bridal affections suited to the way the Lord Jesus presents Himself. She is to be associated in His kingdom, and longs that He should get His rights in the spot of His rejection, where He died for her, and she has so long waited for Him. The nuptial day is deeply desired, and in active love she now bids Him come. It is the proper hope of the Church, what the Bride longs for to satisfy the affections He has Himself awakened in her heart. Nay, is it not for this that He has presented Himself, that He may receive from her the expression of a love beyond all else dear to Him? For the Spirit indwelling is the power of the consciousness of her relationship before it is declared in glory, and of the affections suited to the relationship.

It is not here His coming back to earth to get His rights in the scene where He has been rejected. There would be no place, in such a connection, for the activities of her heart going out from Christ, the central

and absorbing object, to any interests He has in the scene while she waits for Him. His coming *for* the Bride precedes His coming *with* us for the kingdom. If you have read the book of Revelation you will see how everything is coming under His sway—all things in heaven and earth are subjected to Him, every enemy put under His feet. But at the very close, in answer to His special presentation of Himself to the Church, the Holy Ghost gives the cry, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come." It is the proper hope of the Assembly flowing from its relation to Christ as His Bride. Then there are those who have heard His voice, and have life indeed, but are not yet resting on His finished work, so as to have peace, and the Spirit to dwell within them, and so be of the Bride. She wants them to be able to join in the cry that bids Him come—"And let him that heareth say, Come." There are also those who have never yet come to Christ or found anything to satisfy them in an empty world. She has still a testimony for them. It is the word first heard on His lips when here, "Come"; and also the old precious "whosoever" that takes in every one that heeds. "Let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will let him take of the water of life freely" (ver. 17).

There is the Assembly, till the Lord comes back, carrying out and proclaiming the gospel to the very world which has refused and slain her beloved Lord. This is according to His heart, that still lingers here to the uttermost in long-suffering grace over guilty man. Her first object is Himself as she cries out, "Lord, come," and while she waits she turns east, west, north, and south, and says to the weary sin-burdened souls, "Let him that is athirst come"; and

yet wider still, in the activity of Christ's love in her she cries, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely"; *i.e.*, come to Christ. That really is the business of the Bride, the Assembly, when she is not found in worship before the Lord. What a blessed being is the Church, whether you view her as the worshipper of the living God or the witness of His grace to men dead in their sins. She is occupied only with Christ's interests in His absence.

Her voice is heard yet once more in Scripture. On her ear falls the Bridegroom's voice, as He says, "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come *quickly*." He adds just the word she longed for, though it was not for her to dictate to Him—"quickly." She replies, "Amen, come, Lord Jesus." Scripture closes with the Bride of Christ letting out a deep-toned, hearty Amen, as He assures her He is coming quickly. She delightfully acquiesces in His intention. What a moment of joy it will be when we shall see His blessed face and be ever with Him. "Amen, come, Lord Jesus," should be the language of our souls day by day. God wake up our hearts to so blessed a response.

LECTURE IX.

King David's New Cart.

(1 Chron. xiii., xv.)

IN seeking light on our pathway here we frequently get help from the mistakes of other saints recorded in God's Word. There might not seem to you much connection between these Old Testament Scriptures and the subject of the Church, but indeed I think you will find there is a very close connection, as a matter of principle. The test of true love in a day of declension is the maintenance of the truth, and anything short of the maintenance of the truth is not love. Anything that does not maintain the truth is not love begotten of God. Now that is a very simple principle, but it is of the last importance, because love always seeks the blessing of others. Love seeks always to help those of whom it thinks.

I find the apostle John saying, "He that loveth his brother abideth in the light." It is not, "He that abideth in the light loveth his brother." Of course that is quite true. But my loving my brother is the evidence of my abiding in the light, and the result is: "And there is none occasion of stumbling in him" (1 John ii. 10). These are very important principles, and very wide-reaching ones also.

Now let us go back to the Old Testament and read 1 Chronicles xiii. It was because David had not been reading his Bible carefully that the new cart came upon the scene. If he had been reading his Bible carefully he would never have gone to the Philistines for a pattern how to serve the Lord. Do you think he would? I do not think so. He had a Bible, mind you, though it was not as long as yours. But he had it. It was a very much shorter Book he had got, but the point was he had it, but had not heeded it. Now we shall find that between the thirteenth and the fifteenth chapters there is no manner of doubt that he felt that he had been pulled up sharply by God, and he then set himself to read his Bible. And when he read his Bible, he found out what was the mind of the Lord. That is what usually happens to us.

The scene is very interesting. For long, as we know, the Ark had not been in the midst of God's people. If you turn back to the occasion when it was lost, a good long time before, you will see that when the children of Israel, in Samuel's day, went out against the Philistines, they took the Ark of God with them. "So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from thence the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth between the cherubims: and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God. And when the ark of the covenant of the Lord came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again. And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, What meaneth the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews? And they understood that the ark of the

Lord was come into the camp. And the Philistines were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore. Woe unto us! who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty gods? these are the gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness. Be strong, and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the Israelites, as they have been to you: quit yourselves like men, and fight. And the Philistines fought, and Israel was smitten, and they fled every man into his tent: and there was a very great slaughter; for there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen. And the ark of God was taken: and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain" (1 Sam. iv. 4-11). That is to say, the Ark was taken and its bearers slain.

Instead of the Philistines being defeated, as Israel hoped, and as they themselves feared, the very reverse took place, and, as a Psalm says, God "forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which he placed among men; and delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy's hand" (Ps. lxxviii. 60 and 61). Do you know why that was? God will have reality. If Israel thought that the Ark, which was the external pledge of God's presence, could or would support them in their sinful state, they were mightily mistaken. God will be no party to what is not true and real, so He says, "I will let my ark go."

"Well," you say, "that was a dreadful downfall." For God's Ark? Oh no. A terrible downfall for God's people is certain, then and now, if they be not real. That is the lesson I learn from it.

Now come to chapter v. The taken Ark is brought

to Ashdod, and placed by the Philistines in the house of their god Dagon. You know what followed then. The next day they find Dagon's head off, and his hands off, and the next thing is they are very anxious to get rid of the Ark, this symbol of God's presence. That is the world. The world is very keen to get rid of the presence of God. It is therefore a very serious thing if God's people be mixed up with the world, even though it be religious, and I can understand the meaning of the call of God, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing" (2 Cor. vi. 17). Or again, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Rev. xviii. 4). That was Babylon. What is Babylon? It is the world-church. And you and I must not forget that while there is the Church of God, the real thing, there is also the world-church. And therefore we should see what it is. It is a serious thing if the saints of God get mixed up with the world or the world-church, which is Babylon.

God took good care of His own Ark, and also plagued the Philistines, who, after sending it from city to city, determine to be quit of it, saying, "Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it go again to his own place" (ver. 11). This they did in the next chapter. They felt they must get rid of this irksome presence, and they say: "Now therefore make *a new cart*, and take two milch kine, on which there hath come no yoke, and tie the kine to the cart, and bring their calves home from them: and take the ark of the Lord, and lay it upon the cart; and put the jewels of gold, which ye return him for a trespass offering, in a coffer by the side thereof; and send it

away, that it may go. And see, if it goeth up by the way of his own coast to Beth-shemesh, then he hath done us this great evil; but if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that smote us; it was a chance that happened to us. And the men did so; and took two milch kine, and tied them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home. And they laid the ark of the Lord upon the cart, and the coffer with the mice of gold and the images of their emerods" (1 Sam. vi. 7-11). Now a new cart was all very well for the Philistines to use to get rid of the Ark, though it was not according to God's injunction about the Levites. But then they were not Levites, and you do not expect a "natural man" to be intelligent about divine things. God's children, however, should be, for they are "spiritual," unless, through mixing with the world, they have become "carnal" (see 1 Cor. ii., iii.).

And now observe how God took charge of these two milch kine. "And the kine took the straight way to the way of Beth-shemesh, and went along the highway, lowing as they went, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left; and the lords of the Philistines went after them unto the border of Beth-shemesh" (ver. 12). These creatures of God were under His guidance, and they did the reverse of what you would expect—they left their young.

And now when they come to Beth-shemesh there is another lesson. "And he smote the men of Beth-shemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the Lord, even he smote the people fifty thousand and three score and ten men: and the people lamented, because the Lord had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter" (ver. 19). That is to say, when the Ark got among God's people, if there was

not behaviour suited to the Ark, judgment fell again. In plain language, this principle is everywhere in Scripture, God is holy, and He will have reality. And if His people were so prying and curious that they must lift the lid of the Ark, then judgment falls. We have all great need to heed a warning like that, for there is a widespread tendency to admit and justify the working of the human mind in divine things to-day. That is either prying into that which God has not revealed, or lightly regarding that which, in His Word, He has revealed. You may depend upon it the hand of the Lord will fall upon this character of self-will sooner or later in judgment. Church history, ancient and modern, only too plainly illustrates this.

The next thing we find is that "the men of Kirjath-jearim came, and fetched up the ark of the Lord, and brought it into the house of Abinadab in the hill, and sanctified Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the Lord" (chap. vii. 1). Now it is in its right place, under the care of the priests. And there it remains until David is on the throne of Israel. When thoroughly established on that throne, the movement is set on foot, of which we read in 1 Chronicles xiii., where David wants the Ark of God to be brought up into the place that he had prepared.

Now turn to this thirteenth chapter of 1st Chronicles. "And David consulted with the captains of thousands and hundreds, and with every leader. And David said unto all the congregation of Israel, If it seem good unto you, and that it be of the Lord our God, let us send abroad unto our brethren everywhere, that are left in all the land of Israel, and with them also to the priests and Levites which are in their cities and suburbs, that they may gather themselves unto us"

(vers. 1 and 2). There was a great desire for fellowship. All right, that is as it should be; I trust nobody loves fellowship more than I do, but even in a matter for fellowship there must be divine order, and an acting on divine direction.

"And let us bring again the ark of our God to us: for we inquired not at it in the days of Saul. And all the congregation said that they would do so: for the thing was right in the eyes of all the people. So David gathered all Israel together, from Shihor of Egypt even unto the entering of Hemath, to bring the ark of God from Kirjath-jearim" (vers. 3-5). It was a wonderful scene. What tremendous crowds. What a hearty gathering it must have been.

"And David went up, and all Israel, to Baalah, that is, to Kirjath-jearim, which belonged to Judah, to bring up thence the ark of God the Lord, that dwelleth between the cherubims, whose name is called on it. And they carried the ark of God in *a new cart* out of the house of Abinadab: and Uzza and Ahio drave the cart" (vers. 6, 7). Would you not have thought with all that love of fellowship, and desire to have things right, that the King—the leader—would have inquired of God as to whether He had given any instructions as to the transport of His own Ark? We should be sure to think that he would have gone to the Scriptures to find out the right way. But it was not so. David thought, like many a person to-day, that the new cart was a very good mode of carrying that Ark. The way it reached the house of Abinadab would surely do to take it to Jerusalem. That the Philistines—God's enemies—should furnish the idea was a small matter in his eyes. What is the new cart? Anything that is not according to

the pattern of Scripture. I could show you some hundreds of new carts, in Christendom to-day, all professedly carrying the Ark—and mind I do not say they do not carry it—for King David's new cart carried it, though he soon learned his mistake. What different shapes and sizes, characters and colours these new carts present as you glance over Christendom's systems.

The Ark of God was connected with His worship, It was the central bit of the tabernacle. That Ark spoke of Christ. It was the Person of Christ. The mercy-seat, and the blood on the mercy-seat, spoke of Him and His work. Inside the Ark there was the golden pot of manna, Israel's food in the wilderness; Aaron's rod that budded, Christ's priestly grace in resurrection; and then there were the tables of stone, for the law was hidden in Him. You look into these things—they will interest you. Israel had to carry that Ark and its contents through the desert. We too, as Christians, have to carry the Ark. You go back to Israel passing through the wilderness, and you find there were the priests, the Levites, and the common people, or warriors. Well now to-day every Christian is a priest in worship, and every Christian is a Levite for service, and likewise is one of the common people in everyday work, and warfare against the enemy.

Now the particular work of the Levites, we learn from Numbers iv. 15 and Deuteronomy x. 8, xxxi. 9, was to carry the Ark. And that is what David found out afterwards. But he had not found it out here. I do not doubt God has recorded this for our instruction; how even an earnest person, a man with a large heart, and a man who had the interests of

God very deeply at heart, how he might go astray, while seeking to serve God, if he were not absolutely in subjection to the word of the Lord.

"And Uzza and Ahio drave the cart. And David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing," &c. (vers. 7, 8). Well, they pass on. And by-and-by the oxen stumble. Of course they do. And "Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark . . . and there he died before God" (vers. 9, 10). Uzza thought he could take care of God's Ark. But the fact is, God can take care of His own Ark, and if Uzza attempt to sustain and support the Ark, immediately the hand of the Lord is shown. You may depend upon it, the "new cart" style of thing in relation to Christ's Church or Christ's Gospel does not do for God. What do you mean by the new cart? Everything, whether in worship or service, that is not absolutely according to the pattern of Scripture, but after some human pattern, which consequently cannot be divine, and therefore should have no authority over the conscience of a devout and obedient child of God.

Uzza's death woke David up to the error of his ways. At first he judged God—because of the breach made—later he judged himself. "And David was displeased, because the Lord had made a breach upon Uzza: wherefore that place is called Perez-uzza to this day. And David was afraid of God that day, saying, How shall I bring the ark of God home to me? So David brought not the ark home to himself to the city of David, but carried it aside into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. And the ark of God remained with the family of Obed-edom in his house three months. And the Lord blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that he had" (vers. 11-14). Those

three months brought deep blessing into the house of Obed-edom, and during them David evidently took to studying and following the instructions in his Bible, which led to his being greatly blessed soon after, as we shall see.

Now come to chapter xv. "And David made him houses in the city of David, and prepared a place for the ark of God, and pitched for it a tent" (ver. 1). And now comes the proof of his having studied his Bible. "Then David said, *None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites:* for them hath the Lord chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto him for ever" (ver. 2). He said this as though he had made a great discovery, and so indeed it was. But four hundred years before, it had been plainly written, "At that time the Lord separated the tribe of Levi, to bear the ark of the covenant of the Lord, to stand before the Lord to minister unto him, and to bless in his name, unto this day" (Deut. x. 8). The Spirit of God doubtless turned David's attention to this and cognate scriptures, and he at one prepared to obey the Word of God. "Cease to do evil, learn to do well" (Isa. i. 16, 17), became an active principle for the moment. I think I hear him saying then, "What a foolish man I was to imitate the Philistines."

This to me is the picture of many a Christian to-day who has been seeking to worship God, or working for Him according to his own mind, and going here and there just as he fancies he would like to. He has allowed his religious life to be moulded by what he learned as a child, or saw as a man all round about him, without ever going to God's Word to see if He had given any plain directions on these points or not. We may all well learn from David. He got light as

to the carrying of the Ark and acted on it. And if God has given me light, one thing I am sure of, He expects me to respond to it, to answer to it. I cannot help my brethren otherwise. If I saw a man in a ditch I should not go into the ditch to get him out: I should stand upon firm ground and fish him out. If you go into the ditch you will get as muddy as he. You can reach him better from terra-firma. And I believe God has given us to-day the privilege of reaching and helping His dear children, not by going where they are, making light of their inattention to, and departure from His plain Word, but by firmly and tenaciously holding on to the truth that His grace has given us.

There is a religion to-day that suits the world, and suits man in the flesh, and the great effort of Christendom, broadly speaking, to-day is to make the things of God acceptable to man in the flesh. I do not believe God has called us to that. And if He has given us heavenly light, let us take care lest we dim it. Further, that light is given to help others. I think sometimes we are little aware how we may affect others. We have to remember that no man lives to himself. Our walk and ways are very far-reaching and telling upon others.

But David has learned his lesson as he says, "None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites: for them hath the Lord chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto him for ever." And then a second time: "David gathered all Israel together, to bring up the ark of the Lord unto his place, which he had prepared for it" (xv. 2, 3). Mark his next step: "And David assembled the children of Aaron, *and the Levites*" (ver. 4) . . . and said unto them,

Ye are the chief of the fathers of the Levites: sanctify yourselves, both ye and your brethren, that *ye may bring up the ark* of the Lord God of Israel unto the place that I have prepared for it. For because *ye did it not at the first*, the Lord our God made a breach upon us;" and now he gives the reason, "For that we sought him not AFTER THE DUE ORDER" (vers. 12, 13).

There is a great deep underlying principle there for our souls to-day. God has a "due order" as to everything down here for His Church, and if we step out of this divine order, there is pretty sure to be a Perez-uzza. The New Testament contains what David called "due order" instructions for God's Assembly very fully. Our Lord intimated what would be its rallying centre when He said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. xviii. 20). His Spirit would gather, His Name and His Name only be the centre of unity, and His presence was pledged to all so gathered, even though it might be but two or three. There is the resource of faith in a day of Church ruin. The many have departed from the "due order" in this respect, and are gathered round special points of doctrine, or ecclesiastical organisation as to form and mode of worship, Episcopal, Presbyterian, Independent, Baptist, Methodist, &c. This every one knows, and claims the right to practice according to his set views. All such would do well to ask themselves, Is this really the "due order" of God's Word?

Again, take the Lord's Supper. Is there a "due order" for it? Let Acts xx. 7 answer: "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came

together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight." Note the object for which they were gathered together. "To break bread," though Paul took occasion to speak to the gathered saints, both before the breaking of bread and afterwards. The fall and death of Eutychus interrupted, but did not dissolve that meeting. This we learn from verse 11: "When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, he departed." The unity of the whole Assembly, as we have seen already, is expressed in the breaking of bread, and it was that which gathered the saints at Troas—not to hear Paul speak, though he did speak, and speak twice, which gives divine warrant for ministry both before and after the Lord's Supper, should the Spirit of God lead any servant in this way, when the Assembly is gathered together to break bread.

How different is this from what obtains on all hands to-day. Every Lord's Day morning you can see hundreds making towards ecclesiastical buildings. If asked, "Whither bound?" the answer would be, "We are going to church." Further inquiry elicits the fact that Mr —— is to preach, and him they are going to hear. Is this the "due order" of God's Assembly? No page of His book reveals it that I can find. Nowhere in the New Testament can you find the pattern from which the many churches of Christendom are formulated. The idea of *an* Assembly *over* which a solitary servant is placed—no matter how gifted he might be—is utterly foreign to God's Word.' Depend upon it, King David's *new* cart—suggested by the Philistines—has its complete counterpart to-day in

Christendom. Who will deny it? If what we see all round us is to be found in God's Word, it can easily be indicated, but it is not there.

When the Holy Ghost at first came down, and the Assembly was formed, Christ, the Head of the Body, gave suited gifts to meet its need. But they, each and all, were given to and belonged to *the* body—not to *a* body—and were designed for the good of *the* whole Assembly, and not one in any single instance that can be pointed out in Scripture was appointed as "*the* minister" of "*a* church."

It is quite possible you will reply, "What about 'the angel of the church of Ephesus' to whom the Lord wrote in Revelation ii.?" That proves my point—whatever his function, he belonged to "*the* church of Ephesus," not to *a* church—one among many of diverse constitution. The idea conveyed by the angel—where not actually a messenger heavenly or earthly—is clearly the mystical representative of one not clearly seen. We find it so presented in Scripture regarding Jehovah (Isa. lxiii. 9); children (Matt. xviii. 10); and Simon Peter (Acts xii. 15). The angel represents the Assembly, though primarily the elders may have been those whom Christ held responsible for its condition, for the angels and the assemblies are identified. That the clergy took this place eventually is known in history—and that makes their position very serious—but the Spirit does not indicate it in this scripture. They have assumed the position, and must accept the responsibility. The latter will be found to far outweigh the honour implied in the term.

Christ addresses the angels—not even the elders or leaders, who then, as in Acts xx., and always, have a

special place of responsibility. The origin of the term "clergy" is curious. The word from which it springs is κλῆρος—a lot; and, as used in the New Testament by the Spirit of God, evidently means the flock, and *not* the shepherds. It is Peter who says to the elders, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind: neither as lords over God's heritage [or lots, των κλήρων], but being ensamples to the flock" (1 Pet. v. 2, 3). The little companies of Christians were called God's lots. Clergy has been made out of this, having assumed to themselves to be God's lot only; whereas the only use of it in Scripture is as applied to the *laity*, if you please, contrasted with ministers. Of the terms clergy and laity now in common use there is no hint in Scripture. Here again the idea of the "new cart" is suggested, while the "due order" is lost sight of.

All this is not according to God's Word. I am speaking plainly and simply, beloved friends, because I desire your profit, and the order of God's Assembly is plainly given in His Word as to worship and service as we have already seen. And if you and I profess to be of that House, then the divine order of that House ought to be seen in our practical ways, for the saint of God is called to obedience and the Church is the expression of the truth. Let us walk according to it. It is a sorrowful thing to go on consenting to that which is not according to God's mind, and eventually discover, like David, that "we sought him not after the *due order*." I am really exercised about this. If a person say to me, "I do not think you have 'the due order,'" I say, "Sit down then and show me what it is, for I want it."

Let us now see the happy effect of the "due order" being adhered to in David's case. "So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the Lord God of Israel. And the children of the Levites bare the ark of God *upon their shoulders with the staves* thereon, *as Moses commanded*, ACCORDING TO THE WORD OF THE LORD" (vers. 14, 15). If you want to know where to find the due order, read Exodus xxv. 13-15. The Ark was *only* to be carried after that manner. God had written it plainly enough. But David had read his Bible carelessly theretofore. You may say to me, I do not see things as you do. Quite possible; but if you will go and read your Bible you will see what the Lord says the order of His Assembly should be; and that is the vital point, because it is of the last importance to have the mind of God, and not take our own way in anything where the carrying of the Ark—for us the testimony of Christ—is concerned.

When David's new cart was in use we find that stumbling, death, displeasure, and disappointment were manifested, and joy, gladness, and worship conspicuous by their absence. All this is reversed when the "due order" is observed. "Lifting up the voice with joy" (ver. 16) was heard, for "Chenaniah, chief of the Levites, was for song: he instructed about the song, because he was skilful." (ver. 22). It is of vast importance what we sing, as well as being a very nice thing to be able to sing properly. You may not have a very good voice. That is not the point. Can we say, "I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also"? (1 Cor. xiv. 15). It is a great thing to be a New Testament Chenaniah. To be "skilful" in the Assembly is a

great thing, whether prayer, song, worship, or testimony are in question; so that it is of importance that what we allow be true and according to the due order.

We further read: "And Berechiah and Elkanah were doorkeepers for the ark. And Shebaniah, and Jehoshaphat, and Nethaneel, and Amasai, and Zechariah, and Benaiah, and Eliezer, the priests, did blow with the trumpets before the ark of God: and Obed-edom and Jehiah were doorkeepers for the ark" (vers. 23 and 24). Only the priests could blow the trumpets. It takes a priest to give the signal that gathers the Assembly together (see Num. x. 1-10). It was their office and theirs only—not that of the Levites. The Levite cannot do it. And who were the doorkeepers? They took the greatest possible care of the Ark. And surely in connection with the order of the Assembly when gathered for worship, the testimony of the gospel, the ministry of the Word of God, and the admission to His Assembly to-day, it is of great importance to have the spirit of the doorkeepers here. We are to be very careful with regard to everything relating to Christ and His interests.

"So David, and the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands, went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of the house of Obed-edom *with joy*." That is the sure result of obedience. "And it came to pass, when God *helped* the Levites that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, that they offered seven bullocks and seven rams" (ver. 26). Observe God's notice of the Levites when things are thus according to His mind—they are *helped*, and then typically in the sacrifices you see worship flowing up to God. If you and I set ourselves to really obey the Word of the Lord, no matter what it costs, we too

shall find that God will help us, and there will be joy in our souls and worship, and fruitful service Godward.

Then you will find perhaps somebody will despise you, as in our chapter we find Michal despising David. Never mind that; I would rather be an obedient David than a despising Michal. God has given to you and me an opportunity, in the absence of the Lord Jesus Christ, to be faithful to His truth. We have the knowledge that the Holy Ghost is still in the Assembly on the earth, and some of us have by God's grace learned the truth as to His Assembly, and what it is to be gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, if we have that truth, let us be true to it, and let us walk in the liberty of the truth. It may lead to persecution. It must lead to separation, from what we know is wrong, that is a very clear case; because I shall not be able to help a man that is in the confusion of Christendom if I am walking with him in it. You take up your ground firmly, quietly, and humbly, and you will find you will help other people. It is not for a moment that I am inculcating narrowness of heart. God forbid that, and give us a big, broad, loving heart. But while the heart is to be kept broad, it is of necessity a narrow path in which the feet are found, if we are to obey the Lord, and seek to carry out the direct instructions of His Word.

That is why Paul said to Timothy: "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to *faithful* men" (2 Tim. ii. 2). Why faithful men? They were men that would not tone down or fling away the truth. The truth Paul had he passed on to Timothy, and Timothy was to be careful to impart it to faithful men, that they in their turn also might pass it on to others. There were

those who would not have Paul's heavenly line of things, they turned away from him. Not so Timothy, who was to pass on to faithful men the truth he had learned, who should in their turn be able to teach others also. I think, beloved friends, it is a great privilege, a great favour from God, if He has given us to see and seek to act on recovered truth and light. I believe we have it by God's grace. Should it puff us up? God forbid. It was grace that called us as sinners, and if God has given us the light and truth of the Assembly, and what ministry really is, and what it is to be gathered to the Lord's name, it is an immense favour.

God give us grace to be true to what the Lord has taught us. Because depend upon it, "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have" (Luke viii. 18). I would add this, and I am not saying it without close observance, if people do not cherish and hold on to the truth God has given them, by and by their vision becomes dull, they fling it all up, and in course of time become the most determined opponents of the truth they once prized. That is an awful thing. The Lord help us to be true to Himself for His name's sake.

LECTURE X.

The Calf and the Camp.

(Exod. xxxii., xxxiii.; Heb. xiii. 8-16.)

OUR inquiry as to What is the Church? has led us to see what it was as God set it up, what it has become in man's hand, and what it will yet be according to God's purpose. The question now arises, in view of all the ruin and confusion around us, Is there a path for the faithful heart that seeks to walk with God and maintain the truth to-day? Depend upon it there is. There is a striking verse in the tenth chapter of First Corinthians which I will ask you to look at, where the apostle Paul, reviewing, in a figurative way, the history of Israel, says, "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (ver. 11). If the Spirit of God wrote Israel's history "for our admonition," we all need to heed what He tells us, and should seek to learn the lesson thereby inculcated.

Now the Old Testament is the picture book of Christ in some way or other. You get either some presentation of Christ—what He is personally, or what His work was in type or shadow—or there is

presented to us the history of God's professing people as they pass through this scene. Israel in the wilderness is, typically speaking, the description of where you and I find ourselves to-day. It is the place where they were tested, where they learned themselves, and where they learned God. So we, you, I, all of us, are certainly learning ourselves. Whether we are learning God and His mind is another question.

Now I think, beloved friends, it is a great thing to heed the principles which Scripture unfolds. And, in what I now speak of, you will see the importance of what I may call a spiritual mind. That is to say, there will be action on the part of a spiritual person for which there was no direct command, as we shall see presently in Moses' case. But first of all you get this great and oft-repeated thought in the Old Testament, that if there be among His people that which does not suit God, He must withdraw Himself. And if He withdraw, His people who are faithful to Him must withdraw also from that which does not suit Him, if they wish for His company.

Moses describes this most strikingly in the chapter I have just read: "For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not in that *thou goest with us?* so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth" (Exod. xxxiii. 16). God separates His people from the world. That is the great point. It is found all through Scripture. Take the history of Abraham. What happened in his history happens in Israel's. When did God call out Abraham? When idolatry came in (see Josh. xxiv. 2, 3). God said to him, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's

house" (Gen. xii. 1). He went out in the obedience of faith, and became the father of them that believe. When God spoke, he responded in the obedience of faith.

Moses has a very remarkable place in Israel's history as a man and as a leader, and there is something very beautiful in the way in which God speaks about Moses in connection with Jesus, of Whom it is written, "For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses" (Heb. iii. 3). Had Moses glory? Indeed he had. Moral glory frequently covered Moses, and I think there is no place in which it shines out more than in the chapters before us. Moses in the course of his history refuses many things. You all know the start of the man. "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, *refused* to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter" (Heb. xi. 24). The first thing is this, he refused the world. Well, I do not think that is so very difficult. If you have really reached Christ, if you have seen the beauty and glory of Christ, it is not very difficult to refuse the world. It is eclipsed. I found, when I was converted, that the thing I was in before was a hindrance to the new sphere of joy and delight in the Lord, into which the grace of God had brought me. To refuse the world is of deep importance to every one who would be God's servant. Well, that is the first thing. With Moses it was the first step in the right direction.

Now in the chapter that is before us to-night—chapter xxxii—you will see another thing, which really showed where his heart was. He had been upon the mount for forty days, and what was he then learning with God? I daresay many of us have

thought he went up to receive the law. No doubt he did. But that was not all that was in God's mind. He did receive it, but it never reached Israel as pure law. The thing that God really had in His mind reached Israel, but not the bare tables of stone. What Moses got as the expression of God's mind was that lovely picture—the tabernacle. Moses was hearing about Christ for forty days and forty nights, and when it was all over God gave him the tables of stone. He called him up to see patterns of Christ. The tabernacle and all its furniture; the ark, the mercy-seat, the altar of incense, the veil, the candlestick, the table of showbread, and all connected with it, the laver and the altar of burnt offering outside were these. It was the most blessed presentation of Christ in shadow. And then Moses comes down with that in his heart and the tables of stone in his hand.

But what had taken place while he was up on the mount? Now here is a most humbling picture. Whatever is put into man's hand is always spoiled and lost. Because, unless divine things are held in faith, they will very soon give way. "And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him" (Exod. xxxii. 1). Instead of quietly waiting for Moses, as you and I have to wait for the Lord's return, they became restless. We have to wait in faith. We have the Holy Ghost, and the enjoyment of Christ, but outwardly we have nothing to show, and therefore the path of the Christian is a path of faith.

Well, they could not wait, flesh works, and you get this dreadful statement, "Up, make us gods, which shall go before us." What was that? Nothing in the world but unbelief, leading to idolatry and apostasy. Do I hear you say, "I cannot understand that"? Can you not? It is a very striking thing that the Spirit of God should tell you and me it is written for our admonition, so we ought to make sure that we do understand it. Do you know that you and I could do the same? "Oh," you say, "impossible." No, it is just the very thing we are apt to do in principle. You and I like what we can see. You like something you can lean upon. Flesh, nature likes what it can lean upon. And the invisible God is given up. It was seeing the invisible God that always sustained Moses. But Israel wanted something they could see. And you will find that is what is all around in Christendom to-day. In the things of God let us have something we can see. Israel desired the same, and behold a golden calf was made by Aaron's hands.

When you ponder it though, what a terrible revelation of the heart of man is in that scene at Mount Sinai. Then they said, "Make us gods;" and further on they say, "Let us make a captain" (Num. xiv. 4). In all our hearts is the tendency to seek someone we can rest upon, and to find a person who can lead us and guide us; *i.e.*, a person who will take us off the ground of simple faith in God. Moses even says presently to Hobab, "Thou mayest be to us instead of eyes" (Num. x. 31). He was not free of the danger.

When Moses came down from the mount he said to Aaron, "What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?" (ver. 21).

What does Aaron say? "And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf" (ver. 24). As though the calf had made itself and come out! The Spirit of God is careful to tell us he made it with "a graving tool" (ver. 4). It is very easy to use a graving tool to-day, unless we are watchful and dependent. What is the graving tool? I shall not tell you what yours is. It is that with which man's hand can work, in divine things, the outcome of which is something on which the eye can rest, which will relieve the exercise of walking in faith in the living God.

God's eye saw what had happened in the camp that day, just as He sees the corruption of Christendom to-day, and said to Moses: "Go, get thee down; for thy people which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves: they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (vers. 7, 8). In plain language they had dropped into idolatry, and God had been completely set aside. The Lord then says to Moses: "I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people. Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation" (vers. 9, 10). That "let me alone" spoke volumes. It was God saying to His dear servant, I know you have a true heart for Me and My people. Was not that a splendid chance for Moses, if he had not been what he was? If there had

been self-importance in that dear man of God, what a fine opportunity for him. He could easily have stood up and said, "Well, the people have brought this judgment on themselves, and I could not help it, and now God is going to make something of me, I will take it." I think it is so lovely of Moses, he refuses. He refuses himself. He refused the world when in Egypt, that was the first thing, and now he refuses himself. What a lesson for all God's servants! It is like Christ. He is a picture of Christ in that.

What Moses then does is very striking. He turns to God and beseeches Him in the most lovely way, and suggests to Him what would happen if He did not carry Israel into the land of promise. What would the Egyptians say? (ver. 12). Again, God would lose His character, break His word, and fail in His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (ver. 13). And he, as it were, says to the Lord, "It will never do, Lord." The fact was this, he was tenderly careful for God's glory on the one hand, and most solicitous in love and affection for God's people on the other. The effect was, "And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people" (ver. 14).

Thereafter Moses comes down with the tables of stone, and if he had been earnest and zealous for the people God-ward, at the top of the mount, see how zealous he is for God when he comes down from the mount. That is the perfection of a servant of God, and the perfection of a saint. We have to see how things suit God on the one hand, and how they affect the people of God on the other hand. The maintenance of that beautiful and holy principle in this man's soul is easily apparent.

"And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount" (ver. 19). Law, pure and simple, was never found among the people, else they could not have been carried on. But it is very striking to observe that, before the law was brought to them, or the tabernacle set up, the calf had got into the midst of God's people. Their hearts had been turned aside. Then Moses "took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink it" (ver. 20). He sought to make them feel their sin. If I have gone wrong in the things of God, what a happy thing it is if any brother can so bring it home to me, that I see it, feel it, and, in that sense, have to drink it. Israel thereby were compelled to own before God what sinners they had been.

"Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him" (ver. 26). That was the reason why Levi, later, got the priesthood. You will find this if you turn to the thirty-third chapter of Deuteronomy, which illustrates a very fine principle, viz., that faithfulness to God is always rewarded; whether then or now is equally true. "And of Levi he said, Let thy Thummin and thy Urim be with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah; who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children; for they have *observed*

thy word, and kept thy covenant. They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law: they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon thine altar. Bless, Lord, his substance, and accept the work of his hands: smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again" (Deut. xxxiii. 8-11). There you see the blessing of Moses, and he blesses Levi not merely on the ground of the purpose and intention of God, but because they had earned it by faithfulness in a day of general departure from God.

"Who is on the Lord's side?" was then the query and challenge to the faithful. Levi steps out, girds his sword by his side, and goes in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp slaying every man, his brother, his companion, and his neighbour. There was a sense of what was due to God, and what suited God. There sprang up the sense in Levi's mind that God was being insulted, and that God's glory had been traduced, when the people had got so low as to not only disobey His word (see Exod. xx. 4), but had actually "changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass" (Ps. cvi. 20). The sons of Levi were in the mind of God, Who must judge evil. It was terrible work, still they did it. And the result? They got into that peculiar place of blessing of which the chapter in Deuteronomy has spoken.

And now Moses turns again to the Lord in intercession. He says first to the people, "Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the Lord; *peradventure* I shall make an atonement for your sin" (ver 30). And then, "Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold; yet now if thou wilt

forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of the book which thou hast written" (vers. 31, 32). How striking the contrast here between Moses and Jesus. What does Moses do? He comes down in hot anger, breaks the tables of stone, and brings in judgment, and then goes up saying, "Perhaps I shall make an atonement for your sin." What does Jesus do? He comes down with the law in His heart, saying, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." And after He had done it Himself, He went to death for those who had failed, and for all under the curse of a broken law. Having perfectly settled the whole question of sin, He went up, but not with a "peradventure" on His lips. He has gone up to the right hand of God, and carried with Him the witness of the atonement He has effected. Hence instead of God saying, as then, "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out" (ver. 33), He says, because Christ has gone up, having blotted out the sins of sinners, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. x. 17).

But Moses' intercession God hears; and says to him, "Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, mine Angel shall go before thee: nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them" (ver. 34). Hitherto He had been in their midst, and His presence had been with them by night and by day. Now, He says, "I will send mine Angel." He retires. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Depart, and go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I sware unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, Unto thy seed will I give it: and I will send an angel before thee . . . for *I will not go up in the*

midst of thee; for thou art a stiffnecked people: lest I consume thee in the way" (xxxiii. 1-3). Grace is one thing, and government quite another, and you have both principles illustrated in God's ways with Israel. He brought them out of Egypt in pure sovereign grace. They put themselves under law, and under that God's government must come in. If you and I do wrong, the wheels of government will roll on although God forgive us. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. vi. 7, 8). The principle is found here—"I will not go up in the midst of thee," says God.

"And when the people heard these evil tidings, they mourned: and no man did put on him his ornaments. For the Lord had said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel, Ye are a stiffnecked people: I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment, and consume thee: therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, *that I may know what to do unto thee*" (vers. 4 and 5). That is to say, He makes them stand convicted of their sin, with all their ornaments stripped off. God as it were says, "I will think what I will do." And while God is thinking what He will do, Moses, so to speak, says, "I know what I shall do." Read on. "And Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it *without the camp*, afar off from the camp, and called it the Tabernacle of the congregation. And it came to pass, that *every one which sought the Lord* went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was *without the camp*" (ver. 7).

You might say to me, There was no tabernacle then

built. True, Moses had just had the instructions about it in the previous chapters, and you get the erection of it in the thirty-fifth chapter and onwards. Well, what was it? I could not dogmatise. It was certainly a spot, a place where God was to be found, where His presence was secured. And anybody who wanted to have to do with Him then had to go outside the camp. There was a good big bit of distance between the camp and the spot where God was really known. I cannot help thinking it was Moses' own tent. Who bade him do this? Nobody. Do you know why he did it? He had a sense, This will suit the Lord. God's name had been deeply dishonoured in the camp. Was there not to be a spot where He could be found? Surely; so he pitches this tent outside, far off, and calls it the Tabernacle of the congregation. I do not doubt the people in the camp thought it a disorderly action, and I do not doubt that people will do the same to-day, if you and I really heed what the Spirit of God says to us, and act upon it. The word to us is, "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach" (Heb. xiii. 13). I do not doubt the mass thought Moses' action very disorderly. But did he meet God's mind in it? Certainly, or we, in the day of the Church's confusion and sin, should not have been bidden by the Spirit to imitate him, as we are, in the passage last quoted.

There is an immense principle in this. I cannot go on with the camp and all its defilement and have God's presence too, that is clear. It is as true in this day as that. And what is the camp? It will not take a great deal of spiritual discernment to be able to say what the camp is. It has been truly

said to be an earthly religious relationship with God, outside the sanctuary, and established on earth, with a separate caste of priests between men and God. This Judaism was, and Christ came into it, but hate cast Him out of it, and it is now utterly rejected. But, as set up by men, it is the place where God is dishonoured, His Word set aside, and where flesh is allowed a place to do what it likes. It is a religious system that really shuts God out, and introduces what the eye can rest on, and the Lord is thus displaced. The camp is earthly or fleshly religion, but the blood of Christ takes us into heaven now in title, and having an inside place with God, I must have an outside place from the world and must have done with human religiousness. We have got heavenly things and must go outside the camp. Christ suffered without the gate, and if the professing Church has become the camp, the place of the faithful believer is always outside.

Now observe what follows. "And it came to pass, when Moses went out unto the tabernacle, that all the people rose up, and stood every man at his tent door, and looked after Moses, until he was gone into the tabernacle" (ver. 8). I do not doubt they were greatly surprised by the action of this man. He was the leader, he was the mediator, and everything turned now upon the action of him who was the mediator.

But see. "And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and *the Lord talked with Moses*" (ver. 9). God sanctioned in the most remarkable way at that moment the action of His servant, as being a divinely instructed action, and divinely suited to Himself, because He at once puts

Himself by Moses' side. And observe—"And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand at the tabernacle door: and all the people rose up and worshipped, every man in his tent door" (ver. 10). If any one wanted to be near the Lord in that day he had to go outside the camp to get near to Him.

Another very important principle now follows. "And the Lord spake unto Moses *face to face*, as a man speaketh unto his friend" (ver. 11). Never in Moses' history had this taken place before. And I suppose it is this that God calls attention to in Numbers xii. There, if you recollect, Miriam and Aaron speak against Moses, and God defends him, saying, that to a prophet He would make Himself known in a vision or a dream, but "my servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and *the similitude of the Lord shall he behold*: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" (ver. 8). That is the way God challenges them, and commends him. What He refers to doubtless is what we have seen in this remarkable thirty-third chapter of Exodus, where the Lord spake face to face with him, as the result of his being a really separate man to Himself in a day of universal departure from the truth. This action on God's part is full of encouragement for us. If to-day we see the outward Assembly in ruins, and every kind of evil permitted in what bears the name of the Lord, what is the resource of faith? The Lord Himself. If we obey the Spirit's call, "Let us go therefore *unto him* without the camp, bearing his reproach" (Heb. xiii. 13), we shall find what Moses found, viz., that the Lord will make Himself known to us, and give us

His mind as never before. What cheer is this, and to the heart that really loves Him what an incentive to act decidedly for God.

Of Moses we now read, "And he turned again into the camp: but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle" (ver. 11). Now a person might say, Which was right, Moses or Joshua? I will only say to every young man, if you keep close by Joshua, you will do. And why did Joshua not go back? Joshua had gone out, and he did not go back. Why? He had this sense, I take it, Moses is in particular relationship with God, he might do what I cannot do. You cannot limit God in what He shall do. But I think Joshua was a very wise man. He went out, and stayed out, and God took particular notice of him. He was a promising young man of faith and energy, which his after history confirms. Depend upon it his history afterwards in relation to Israel, in spying out the land, and bringing the people into the land of promise, is very largely connected with Joshua's action here. It is a great thing, if God has given us light, to be true to it. So having gone out, Joshua found himself in God's company, and remained out. He was a very sensible young man. The place of blessing for you and me is in the holy presence of God, outside what does not suit God. If we have found that spot, let us abide there, and not go back. If unfound, let us seek it.

It is a great thing to live before the Lord in the sense of what really suits Him in our life, ways and associations, ecclesiastical and otherwise. We can plainly see where most of God's people are, and how can we help them is the question. Moses helped the children of Israel by very rigid separation. You will

find this, if a person is not separate, he is not preserved; and on the other hand you will find all through Scripture that the separate person is the preserved person, whom God will enlighten and use for His glory. Let me illustrate. Samson was a man who lost his outward separation. Then he lost his hair—his power—the secret of his Nazariteship. What is the next thing? He lost his liberty. What next? He lost his eyes, and then he lost his life. When, through mixing with the world socially or religiously, I have lost my separation, my power, my spiritual liberty, and my eyesight, *i.e.*, divine perception of what suits God, it is high time I was gone. I am of no real use to God's people or anybody else. Samson to me is a most solemn beacon. On the other hand, Joshua illustrates the value of being separate and firm in what you know to be the truth.

Let us now look at the passage I have already quoted from in the thirteenth chapter of Hebrews: "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come. By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of *our* lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Heb. xiii. 12-16). People will then say, "What is the camp?" The camp to-day is practically speaking what the camp was in Moses' day—a spot where God's name is known and owned, but where it is dishonoured, and where He Himself is really set aside. Those to whom Paul wrote knew the meaning of the camp

very well, if you and I do not. You must bear this in mind, that when Christianity came on the scene God had long patience with the Jewish believers, *i.e.*, the Christians who had been Jews. I do not doubt that for a long time they met with Christians one day, and went back to Judaism and the synagogue the next day. And you say, "Is that wrong?" Well, God was leading many of His people out of Judaism, and with such He was very patient. The Spirit of God saw the unsettled state of these Hebrews, and showed them, in the epistle addressed to them, that they must have everything, which has to do with their religious associations, not with an earthly system, which God had rejected, but with an unseen Christ at God's right hand. God had been patient with them, but the time had come when the vacillation I have spoken of must cease. The Lord's word then sounded, "Let us *go forth* therefore *unto him without the camp*, bearing *his reproach*" (ver. 13). They were to go forth to a despised, rejected Saviour—One who had neither His rights in the world nor in what professed to be God's witness on earth.

What, then, is the camp to-day? Christendom, as you see it now. Christendom is only a bit of Jewish patchwork. Judaism acknowledgedly was religion in the flesh. Christianity subsists in the Holy Ghost. Christendom is the outcome of the mingling of the former as to many of its forms—not its sacrifices—with a little of the truth of the latter. That will not do. There has been the effort to provide for saint and sinner at one moment, under the title of "public worship." That which has resulted is what we have been considering as we have traced the history of God's Assembly in Scripture. For all intents and

purposes "the camp" of Paul's day is "the camp" of the day you and I live in. Do I hear you ask again, What is the camp? If you are exercised before God, you will soon find out what it is. It is the place where Christ, as Head of His Body, is not obeyed, where the Holy Ghost as the One who is here in the name of Christ has not been accorded His place, and where the truth of the Assembly of God is not known.

To us to-day, therefore, the apostle's call to "go forth unto him (Jesus) without the camp" is as urgent and applicable as to those who first got the exhortation. The loving and obedient disciple will follow the Shepherd's voice. We must be careful, however, that it is only to Himself that we go out. Anything short of, or more than Jesus Himse would put us with those of whom it is written, "And they came not *for Jesus' sake only*, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead" (John xii. 9). Anything beside Jesus is a Lazarus—even clearer ministry of the Word. Souls so affected are unstable. After they have seen Lazarus, they go back. They have not gone out to Jesus only. We shall find it a very narrow path, but we should maintain a broad inclusive heart, and thus in our prayers and affection take in every saint and servant of God. But as to the path of our feet it must be narrow, or else we shall practically give up the truth.

In days of evil God always expects to find true and faithful hearts, prepared to do His will at all costs. Hence the apostle Paul says to Timothy, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to *faithful men*, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. ii. 2). If I am not in the truth myself I cannot teach you,

but if we have known the sweetness and joy of going forth to Jesus outside the camp, bearing His reproach, there is something that will keep us there, and help us to stimulate others to tread the path which has brought such deep blessing to our own souls. Joshua abode there. May you and I seek grace from God to go forth to Jesus and abide with Him outside the camp. It can only be for a little while that we shall have the privilege of suffering with and for Him. Outside the camp in rejection with Christ below is what answers to our heavenly portion with Him on high. We are passing on from scenes of grace to realms of glory. "For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come" (ver. 14). We do not expect to stay here. What are you looking for? The coming of the Lord to take us all to be with Himself is the proximate and happy hope of His Assembly.

Now let us see what goes on outside that camp —according to God: "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God *continually*, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name" (ver. 15). There you really touch worship. The *holy* priesthood of which Peter speaks (1 Pet. ii. 5) comes into exercise, and God gets His portion first. Do you remember what He said to His priests of old? "Command the children of Israel, and say unto them, My offering and my bread for my sacrifices made by fire, for a sweet savour unto me, shall ye observe to offer unto me in their due season" (Num. xxviii. 2). You will never really know what worship is until you are in spirit, soul and body, outside the camp. What Numbers xxviii. describes typically—God's food offered to Him by the priests of that day—you will have your

part in spiritually, as you find yourself in the spot the Lord would have you in. In Hebrews x. 19, 20, we are exhorted to go inside the veil through the blood of Jesus. That too is for worship, but very few saints of God seem to rise to it. Why? They shrink from "going outside the camp," and fail to enter "inside the veil." The two must go together. They are like a pair of scissors. There are two blades, but they are of no use whatever unless riveted together. Then they form a cutting and most useful instrument. Hebrews x. and xiii. are the two blades. Keep them separate, and they are really useless. The saint, who, for fear of reproach, will not go "outside the camp," never really goes "inside the veil" as a true worshipper. On the other hand, let me get "inside the veil," and taste the joys that are there, and I am keen to stay "outside the camp," lest I should by worldly associations lose the light and joy God has given me.

But this is not all, for the Spirit says, "But to do good and to communicate, forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (xiii. 16). There the *royal* priesthood comes in view. Their business is "to show forth the virtues of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Pet. ii. 9). On the one hand, God looks for the "sacrifice of praise" which the holy priests present to Him; and on the other hand, He is "well pleased" with the royal priest's sacrifices of active benevolence. No *dummies* are expected to sit in His Assembly, and no *drones* be found in His hive. The holy and royal priests have each two hands; with one he ministers to God, with the other to the need all around him, and that takes in the preaching of the gospel, the ministry to the saints, and the care of the poor, &c.

"Let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them," was a very remarkable word that Jeremiah heard in his day. His was a very similar case to ours. It was a day of idolatry, a day when things were all in decline, and where the difficulty was for anybody to stand for the truth. He had stood for it and suffered accordingly. His resource was, however, in the Lord, and to Him—not without some feeling regarding his foes—he says, "O Lord, thou knowest: remember me, and visit me, and revenge me of my persecutors; take me not away in thy long-suffering; know that for thy sake I have suffered rebuke" (Jer. xvii. 15). He was bearing the reproach of Christ, as, before him, Moses bore it. I do not doubt that Caleb and Joshua also bore it for maintaining the truth. They were very nearly stoned, those two men (see Num. xiv. 10). Here Jeremiah was in similar circumstances. What sustained him? "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts" (ver. 16). He got light and food from God's Word. He was sanctified to God, called by His name, and it was as partaking of the Word of God that he suffered, just as Christ did. As a result he had deep joy in his heart.

So will it be with us also if we too seek, by grace, to stand for and maintain God's truth, no matter what it cost us. Do you know what it cost Jeremiah? The loss of all company but God's. Jeremiah was no loser. He says, "I sat not in the assembly of the mockers, nor rejoiced; I sat alone." Why? "Because of thy hand: for thou hast filled me with indignation" (ver. 17). He had the godly sense

in his soul, I cannot go on with what I see among God's people; I cannot sanction with my presence that which does not suit the Lord. Do you think he enjoyed that? I trow not. He felt it acutely, it touched his heart deeply. Hear his words, "Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed? wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail" (ver. 18). His faith began to fail for a moment, and evidently he thought of going back to what he had left. It was a temptation of Satan. Note how the Lord succours and cheers him. "Therefore thus saith the Lord, If thou return, then will I bring thee again [the Lord says, If you go back, Jeremiah, I shall pull you out again]; and *thou shalt stand before me:* and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth." It is worth anything to be able to help God's saints into the truth, and what a privilege to be God's mouthpiece to His own, and to communicate His mind.

Now I do not believe that you and I can be God's mouthpiece unless we really are to-day where Jeremiah was that day. It is absolutely impossible for us to take forth the precious from the vile, unless we are really and practically outside that which God's Word condemns, and in the clean spot with the Lord Himself. If you know where that blessed spot is, and think I am not there, you might show it to me, and I will make for it. Oh, beloved brethren, I trust indeed that I know what it is by His grace. Is it not just holding Himself, His Name, His Word? His Spirit and His presence are ever graciously granted to the two or three who will be true to the light He has given. But if I go back to the camp, I shall not

be the man that can help anybody out of it. Do not deceive yourself, you must be a separate saint if you are to take forth the precious from the vile. God then says He will speak through you. He will make you His minister to others. Wondrous grace and honour.

"Let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them. And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brazen wall: and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee to save thee and to deliver thee, saith the Lord. And I will deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible" (Jer. xv. 19-21). These words were Jeremiah's instructions as well as his support. *Do not you go back*, was the purport of these words to him, and I believe that the word to us to-day is exactly the same. Jeremiah might say, "But I had to be all alone, Lord." "Never mind," says God, "you have Me for your Companion." He was well off.

The question for each of us then is simply this, Have I got God's light and truth as to His Assembly? It is one thing to *admire* the truth, quite another to *adopt* it. Many to-day will listen to and *admire* the truth without really adopting it; *i.e.*, the question for each after all is this, Is God's truth worth standing for? That test will come more than once or twice in our pathway. What shall our answer be?

Whatever is God's testimony for the moment is the thing that the devil turns all his batteries on. Satan has always done his very best to upset the people of God and spoil their enjoyment of what was theirs peculiarly for the then moment. It is the very same in the day in which we live. To apprehend

what the Church is, and to act in accordance with the truth of it, is a privilege God accords us. If we are wise, we shall live for the Lord. And we shall be wise and happy too if we can say with the apostle, "We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth" (2 Cor. xiii. 8). Of everything we may inquire, 'Will it help the truth? No. Then it will not do for me, says the heart that is true to Christ.

The Lord help us all to heed His Word and do His will. The opportunity of pleasing Him down here will soon be over. If we have heeded His command, "LET ALL THINGS BE DONE DECENTLY AND IN ORDER," we shall surely hear another word shortly, "WELL DONE, THOU GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT . . . ENTER THOU INTO THE JOY OF THY LORD."

Printed at THE DARIEN PRESS, *Edinburgh.*